

Social Scientist

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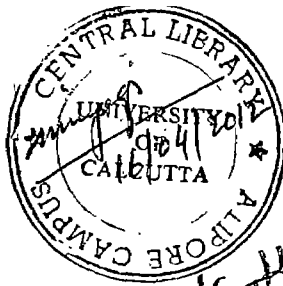
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Introduction



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It is a measure of the resilience of the Left in India that, despite heavy electoral losses and despite the tragic rift that has emerged between the parliamentary and the insurgent Left, the passion for rigorous intellectual analysis and critique of the current phase of capitalism has not ebbed or slackened in the slightest. The essays in this volume are revised versions of lectures on the relations between politics and political economy in India given at a seminar last year at the Heyman Centre for the Humanities at Columbia University. They reflect this passion and rigour in gratifying abundance.

Sitaram Yechury's essay, which opens this volume, traces the origins of the Left's various visionary commitments to the long struggle for freedom against British imperialism. Indeed, he argues, since these commitments constitute the very 'idea of India' that emerged in that struggle, the Left's role is absolutely central to the future of India as well, that is, it is central to consolidating and advancing the achievements of that struggle.

What is this 'idea of India'? As he presents it, it is the idea of a nation that transcends its diversities and divisions in favour of a substantially *inclusive* unity rather than a unity based on the elevation of particular classes or communities or castes into a position of dominance, excluding others.

What Yechury is articulating here might be viewed as an ideal of a nation that rejects the entire trajectory in Europe that emerged after the Westphalian peace. What emerged then (and there) was a compulsion to seek legitimacy for a new kind of state, one that could no longer appeal to older notions of the 'divine right' of states personified in their monarchs. It sought this legitimacy in a new form of political psychology of a new kind of subject, the 'citizen', a psychology based on a *feeling* for a new form of entity that had emerged, the 'nation'. This feeling, which came to be called 'nationalism', had to be generated in the populace of citizens, and the standard process that was adopted in Europe for generating it was to find an *external* enemy *within*, the outsider, the 'other' in one's midst, (the Irish, the Jews, to name just two) to be despised and subjugated. In a somewhat later time, with the addition of a more numerical and statistical form of discourse, these came to be called 'minorities' and

the method by which this feeling for the nation was created came to be called 'majoritarianism'. One way to understand Yechury's claim of the 'idea of India', then, is to see the Left's role in the struggle against British Imperialism in India as, in part, a refusal of this entire historical trajectory (by which national unities are achieved) that is exemplified by India's European master and to forge a quite different ideal of a unified nation that should emerge after independence.

The prodigious and sustained mobilization of its masses that India witnessed over the last three crucial decades of the freedom struggle could not have been possible without an alternative and *inclusionary* ideal of this kind to inspire it. In its crucible, Yechury argues, three commitments in particular were formulated and it was the Left and the Left alone that articulated these with real conviction in their uncompromised and unqualified form. The first was to a firmly progressive stand on the 'land question', the second was to the linguistic reorganization of the states, and the third was to a concept of secularism which was not merely intended as an equidistance on the part of the state from all the religions of the land, but a stronger commitment to a polity in which there is a lexical ordering such that if there ever was an inconsistency between religious commitments and the principles of a secular state, the latter must come first. (Yechury describes this as a *separation* of religion and the state, and I think the idea of such a lexical ordering might present a specific elaboration of what is meant by the metaphor of 'separation' that he has in mind.)

It is the combination of these three 'issues', as he calls them, that was crucial to drawing in an inclusive way the vast masses of people into the 'idea of India'. It did so by respecting their diverse linguistic and cultural and even religious heritage, (i.e., since the idea of the lexical ordering I mentioned above allows that last heritage a place, only displacing it when, and if, there is a conflict with the principles of a secular state) while at the same time transcending the diversity by speaking to their *material* conditions (the 'land question') and their participation in a polity on equal terms, without the arrogance (on one side) and resentment (on the other) that come from erecting a distinction between a majority and minorities.

Each of these three issues he argues, was met with resistance by forces of the Right and particularly —on the last— by the Hindu Right. Thus the 'idea of India' has had to be defended with patience and fortitude over the years since Independence and the more so now, ever since the Congress party in recent decades cannot be counted as a reliable ally in defending them.

The other, not unrelated, theme in Yechury's paper is the embrace of neo-liberalism in India in the last two decades. He takes a sturdy stand against this turn and then tactfully raises questions for the Indian Left itself,

questions regarding both its policies of the recent past and the tasks it must pursue in the future. After pointing to the constant misinformation and malice in media reports against the Left governments as well as the antics of an unscrupulously opportunistic opposition—in Bengal in particular—there is an honest acknowledgement on his part of such things as the Left government 'not having done its homework' before pursuing some of its specific policies of industrialization in the heady period after the electoral success in 2006, which it interpreted perhaps too uncritically, at any rate too unqualifiedly, as mandating these policies. He ends by situating this acknowledgement in a more fundamental criticism about whether Left governments shouldn't be considering with greater care and analysis than they have hitherto done, what notion of development is compatible with a deep and abiding opposition to neo-liberalism.

That question is a central theme of all the other papers that follow.

C. P. Chandrashekhar's impressively analytic paper covers a lot of ground in a relatively short space and instructs us first into the nature of neo-liberalism in general, starting with its general principles and then showing why it is a more than routinely difficult task to formulate alternatives to it—not only because it emerged triumphantly on top of a defeat of 'actually existing' socialist societies that might have provided a pole of exemplary resistance but because the model of socialism that those societies were supposed to live up to (even if they did not do so) do not really provide a conceptual alternative since the model was so ridden with difficulties—difficulties both of theory (ranging from the epistemic deficits that come from being blinded to the vast and various information needed for highly centralized planning to the assumption of shared objectives in a highly miscellaneous and variegated cast of decision-makers at different levels of decision-making) as well as difficulties of practice (the familiar problems of bureaucratization at the top echelons of planning with all its implications of distance from the needs and aspirations of the wider population, leading to a form of alienation which, though different from the alienation typical of capitalist societies, is nevertheless discouraging for those seeking more collectivist alternatives to capitalism).

He then proceeds to give a brief historical account of neo-liberalism's sordid career in Latin America, Africa, and other countries in Asia, with a late arrival in India, whose successive governments since the early 1990s seem not to have learnt the lessons of its failures and crises-ridden evolution in other parts of the world. (Chandrashekhar thinks of China as something to be set apart. Because of its unique revolutionary history and the nature of the Chinese state, it cannot properly or, at any rate *exactly*, be characterized in neo-liberal terms.)

This is followed by an analysis of neo-liberalism in India and the problems visited upon the Left by the social and political transformations it has produced, problems that come first from having almost completely lost the support of the traditional, progressive, metropolitan middle classes of an earlier period, second from the overwhelming propagandist slant in neo-liberalism's favour that comes from an adoring and cheerleading media, and third from the pervasive fear of prompting capital flight if one adopts progressive policies, rendering the very idea of such policies as immediately tarnished by terms of abuse or condescension such as 'populist' or 'impracticable' or 'out of date'.

The paper ends with a detailed analysis of the destructive effects of neo-liberal tendency on the working people of the country, both in their conditions and, as a result, in their capacity to mobilize politically. Organized labour suffers greatly under this tendency in ways that result in its having to abandon its will to organize and make demands—for fear of losing ground to and being displaced by the rapidly increasing informal and unorganized labour (also created by this tendency) waiting in the wings. The Left thus loses its primary site of vanguard strength in the labour force. The attack on the public sector by widespread privatization deepens this problem, and the general problem of the informalization of labour which leads to very large numbers of casually contracted and, worse, self-employed labour, further undercuts traditional forms of organization and protest since there is no target, no direct employer, towards which the protest can be directed and to whom demands can be made.

The paper does not close with any specific positive suggestions for a Left political strategy but it does leave one with a vexing sense of two things that almost amount to a paradox. Never before has the Left been so weak in India. Yet never before has the *objective* condition been such that it is *only* the Left that could possibly overcome it.

Jayati Ghosh shows real sensitivity in her paper to the ways in which current forms of primitive accumulation deepen the familiar and ongoing discriminatory practices that have long characterized Indian social life.

She begins her paper with some deflationary remarks about the misplaced euphoria of India (along with China) being described as the 'success story' of neo-liberal economic policies, a self-congratulation strengthened by the fact that India, unlike so many other countries, has avoided the worst effects of the recent global financial crisis. A myopic focus on aggregate GDP and per capita figures might give credence to these attitudes but she patiently exposes how different the recent years of growth have been from the growth some decades ago that owed to the stimulus of public spending. Owing instead to debt-driven bubbles, growth in the current period is not accompa-

nied by any spread of benefits to the vast majority of the population of the country. She shares with Chandrashekhar' his detailed anxieties about the effects of the policies that are responsible for such growth, on the working people of the country —their dispossession, their displacement from traditional sectors, their failure to be absorbed in other emerging sites of metropolitan employment, continuing high levels of poverty, insecurity on the food front, to say nothing of health, housing and education. She puts her conclusions in striking terms: the more the ordinary mass of people are *included* in the global political economy by the policies of the last twenty years, the more they are *excluded* from the benefits that are reaped in such an economy, and she protests the innocuous word 'failure' to describe this exclusionary outcome of these policies —that word suggests that their exclusion is an improvable lapse on the part of these policies, but in fact it is an essential consequence of the policies, which need, not improvement, but elimination and replacement.

Built into this exclusion is the exploitation of existing caste and gender inequalities.

It is perhaps obvious that policies that privatize the public sector, that reduce poverty eradication and subsidy programmes, that commercialize agriculture...were bound to affect women more than men, if for no other reason than that the poverty they induce will —in a patriarchal society— extend the already existing inequalities of the distribution of household goods. And since women are not considered independently in programmes of rehabilitation for those displaced and dislocated by these policies, they are also bound to fall through the safety nets, such as they are, much more than male members of Indian society. Ghosh outlines at diagnostic length the extensively detrimental effects of these policies on women's employment and wages and education in particular, but finds some faint sign of encouragement in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, were it to be implemented in a way that allows for more flexible forms of work.

It would not be surprising either if the cuts in public spending exploited existing caste inequalities. Citing details from work done by S. K. Thorat and Ghanshyam Shah as well as the Human Rights Watch report of 2007, she presents a vivid picture of how caste inequalities feed the accumulation process that underlies current forms of 'growth'. As Ghosh says: "The point to note here is not that such practices [of caste discrimination] continue to exist, but that they have become the base on which the economic accumulation process rests."

This last claim, however, is ambiguous between two things, one less strong than the other. It could mean what, on the surface, it says —that the discriminatory practices of caste are not merely parallel to the process of

accumulation, but the basis of that process. Or it could mean the following stronger thing: It is not merely a contingent fact that the process of accumulation bases itself on such ongoing social hierarchies, but rather, in the present conjuncture in India, it is *bound to do so*, i.e., there is a *necessity* about this which comes from the *nature* of the structures of political economy that countries such as India currently find themselves in. The analyses that Ghosh invokes by the authors and report I mentioned above falls short of making this last more ambitious claim. But the stronger claim is the central hypothesis of Prabhat Patnaik's paper in this volume and he argues for the hypothesis in a complex series of steps, part historical and part analytic.

One central element in the argument is a distinction between two notions of 'community', which stand at two ends of the passage from feudalism to a modern capitalist society. In feudal societies, the relevant notion of community is one that gives people a sense of belonging but often (such as with caste in India), that belonging is determined by social hierarchies into which individuals involuntarily fall and which subject these individuals to 'explicit coercions'. Modern capitalist society precisely deprives individuals of both these things at once: by erecting each individual as a bearer of abstract forms of freedom, it liberates them from these explicit coercions they suffered in an hierarchical society, but it also deprives them of communitarian belonging, and so the more modern forms of coercion they now suffer are not 'explicit' but the 'imperceptible' sufferings of atomization, such being the nature of the loss of subjecthood in a capitalist formation. It is only when these individuals voluntarily forge the solidarities of organized labour in resistance to capitalist exploitation, that an alternative, second form of community comes into being, an essentially proletarian phenomenon, a modern form of community that works towards the destruction and transcendence of what Patnaik calls the 'spontaneous' tendencies of capital. In an eloquent turn of phrase, he describes this distinction between two notions of community as "the community that capitalism destroys and the community that would destroy capitalism".

The other central element in the argument adds one vital emphasis to the excellently clear specifications given by Ghosh and Chandrashekhar of the forms of displacement and dispossession generated by neo-liberal economic policies. Like them, he points out that the nature of primitive accumulation of capital in a system that is governed so predominantly by international finance is such as to dispossess petty producers while failing to accommodate them in alternative forms of employment. But what Patnaik is keen to bring onto centre-stage is that this means that they are left in acute distress *in their existing occupations*.

This fact considerably arrests the canonically expected transition that is supposed to occur from the first notion of community to the second. Because they continue to be mired in their old occupations, they are not able to shake off the explicit coercions of the old form of community and fail to make the transition that releases them into the more modern forms of social relations within which new forms of solidarity and a modern form of community are formed. Such advancement as they might seek now inevitably has to rely on notions of identity and belonging that are available in the older forms of community, which then generates a recognizable form of identity politics with which the bourgeoisie as well as the state has to make its compromises, thus entrenching even further the older notion of community, even as Indian society advances into the bosom of the most grotesque forms of modern metropolitan life-styles.

This convincing argument, which I have presented in a very bare and skeletal form, is dialectically nested in Patnaik's paper in a much larger discussion of Marxist and communist literature on the role of the undermining ('smashing') of landlordism in the transition from feudal forms of community to capitalist societies and the modern notions of community that might emerge there. I cannot expound that interesting larger context in a brief Introduction. But I do want to raise a question about whether this particular argument Patnaik gives for the stronger of the two claims I mentioned earlier about the *necessity* and the integrity of the link between the process of capital accumulation and the social phenomenon of caste, carries over to forms of community that have to do not with caste and the identity politics of caste, but those of religion. One might think that it is bound to carry over (and Patnaik in one or two places, passingly suggests that it does) since religion and caste might both seem to naturally fall under what he describes as the 'older' notion of community and also because it is not easy to separate religion from caste, at least in the case of Hinduism. But all my own theoretical and historical instincts are to say that it would be a mistake to breezily extend Patnaik's argument in this way.

It is crucial to his argument that the lineaments of the *older*, pre-modern and pre-existing notion of community persists even within the most advanced form of capitalism that India has ever witnessed because its effect on petty producers is such that they do not leave their existing occupations, despite their great distress. What I doubt is that 'religion' in the sense that has emerged in the identity politics around religion of the last several decades is properly attributed to the lineaments of the older form of community that existed in India prior to the transformations wrought by modern, capitalist developments in the twentieth century. Such old forms of community that existed through the ages are not properly describable in terms of the notion

of religion that has surfaced in the identity politics around religion since the mid-forties in India. So, whatever it is that the bourgeoisie and the state is making its compromises with in the identity politics around *religion* in the last sixty or seventy years or more, never existed in the older form of community prior to the modern period of capitalist society in India. The syncretic and unselfconscious practices of religion, whether Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh...in India in that prior period are unrecognizable in the newly politically constructed notions of religious community with which the bourgeoisie and the state has been making its political compromises in the period of modern capitalism in India. In fact, it is even perhaps likely that the *newly*, politically constructed notions of religious community that give rise to the identity politics around religion (rather than caste) have appeal only among the class of petty producers who *do leave their existing occupations* and find themselves distressed in dislocated lives and, as a result, seek new forms of identity that these new forms of politically constructed religious communities offer. So it would be interesting to study the extent to which Patnaik's argument that rightly stressed those who do *not* leave their existing occupations favours his analysis on theme of caste politics today, while an analysis of a different kind of recent identity politics around religion, would have to stress those who *do* leave their existing occupations and fall into a rootlessness that makes them seek new forms of identity that they never had to seek before in the old form of community. That communal riots tend to occur almost entirely in urban areas may provide some evidence for this last point. (I say all this too cryptically and without any deeper analysis than I have given in these few words, and I would admit that the entire question is complicated, of course, by the fact that there may not always be such a clear divide between the identity politics around caste that Patnaik focuses on and the one around religion—at least around Hinduism—that my last remarks address. But I think this complication can be suitably elaborated and addressed without undermining the point that two different analyses are needed.)

I have focused on the central line of argument in Patnaik's paper that links it with Ghosh's discussion of primitive accumulation and the segmentation of labour, in particular the segmentation in terms of caste. I would like to close this Introduction by saying just a word about the implications of Patnaik's opening section in which he argues against economists (such as Amartya Sen) who think of India's painful pursuit of primitive accumulation in the current era as analogous with its earlier pursuit in Europe, something that must be undergone if India is to overcome poverty and emerge as a prosperous nation. To the distress and displacement that this form of capitalist development creates, Sen is cited as saying that it is the unavoidable path that London and Manchester went through as well. Patnaik finds this

analogy less than convincing because Sen crucially fails to acknowledge the historical fact that the earlier displacements in Europe were mitigated by massive transatlantic migration and, generally, by the range of opportunities that European imperialism made available to its own working people. No such mobility and opportunities are available to the masses of Indian people immiserated by the process of primitive accumulation to be found in India today. Perhaps Sen would respond by saying that that just makes more urgent something he has always urged —that India, despite seeking the path of development it has in the last two decades, must also seek (in a way that Europe did not have to in its early phases of capitalist development for the reason Patnaik gives) to provide substantial safety nets for the worse off. The large question, of course, is whether this can be done within the specific policies that it has embraced in the last two decades, a question that Sitaram Yechury in his paper quietly but squarely asks the Left to address.

One might think, reading the papers in this volume by Chandrashekhar and Ghosh, and Patnaik, that it would be complacent to simply assume an affirmative answer to this question. But that complacency seems to be everywhere in evidence. Sen, at least, does not (at any rate, so far as I know, he does not) say that the safety nets *are in fact* being provided in the present neo-liberal dispensation. That is, however, explicitly being said by others, even by those roughly on the Left. To give just one example, in a recent paper, Partha Chatterji approvingly cites the economist Kalyan Sanyal and says: "Thus, while there is a dominant discourse about the importance of growth, which in recent times has come to mean almost exclusively capitalist growth, it is, at the same time, considered unacceptable that those who are dispossessed of their means of labour because of the primitive accumulation of capital should have no means of subsistence. This produces, says Sanyal, a curious process in which, on the one side, primary producers such as peasants, craftspeople and petty manufacturers lose their land and other means of production, but, on the other, are also provided by governmental agencies with the conditions for meeting their basic needs of livelihood. There is, says Sanyal, primitive accumulation as well as a parallel process of the *reversal of the effects of primitive accumulation*."¹ (The italics are *not* mine.)

Chatterji's paper claims to provide "a new conceptual framework" that better analyzes India's politics and political economy in a period where there is so much informalization of labour, than more traditional Left accounts. It is a framework that acknowledges these reversals of the effects of primitive accumulation as occurring in a form of politics that is best theorized not by notions of civil society but what he prefers to call 'political society' in which ameliorations are constantly being achieved for those working in informal units by a new form of democratic navigation in which 'non-corporate'

capital puts aside the centrality of further accumulation and profit for another kind of logic, dominated by the provision of livelihood for those who work in those units.

The essays in the present volume, especially those by Ghosh and Chandrashekhar, repeatedly point to the informalist direction that employment has taken under neo-liberal policies, so there is agreement on some of the basic facts of the current situation. But there is a stark, a truly glaring, difference in the way that they and Patnaik describe the impoverished and immiserated conditions of the working poor affected by these policies and Sanyal's and Chatterji's descriptions of the 'reversals' and safety nets that are being provided for the working poor by this new form of democratic politics around the efficacies of 'non-corporate' capital. Though I have strong views on the subject, I will not, in a short Introduction, try to assess and adjudicate which of these measurably different descriptions hold more accurately of the effects of primitive accumulation in India in the last few years. I use the word 'measurably' and mean it. Perhaps, in the end, it will turn on how poverty itself is to be measured, a subject on which Prabhat Patnaik writes at some length in the opening section of his paper. If his views there, and the analysis on which it is based², are right, Sanyal's and Chatterji's position will seem culpably complacent, far more so than anything that Patnaik rightly finds ill-judged in Sen. Of the many appreciative things an editor can say of the essays in this volume, one is that, through the detail and the rigour of their analysis, they will force us out of our complacency.

Akeel Bilgrami
Guest Editor

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1. Chatterji is referring to the following publication: Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2007). The reference for Chatterji's own paper is Partha Chatterji, "Democracy and Economic Transformation in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 19, 2008.
2. Patnaik U. (2010a) 'Trends in Urban Poverty under Economic Reforms 1993-4 to 2004-5' *Economic and Political Weekly* 45(3) January 23-29.

_____ (2010b) 'Origins of the food crisis in India and Developing countries' in Fred Magdoff and Brian Tokar (eds.) *Agriculture and Food in Crisis: an Overview* Monthly Review Press.

Neo-Liberalism, Secularism and the Future of the Left in India

Sitaram Yechury

I write today in the aftermath of one of the worst electoral setbacks that the Left in India has suffered recently in our fifteenth general elections in May 2009. However, I must hasten to add that the influence of the Left on the evolution of modern India goes much beyond its electoral performance. Nevertheless, these results throw up many questions concerning both the theory and praxis of the Left in India. They must also be seen in their specific context and the specific electoral tactics that the Left pursued. The projection of an alternative government in Delhi, by a conglomerate of non-Congress non-BJP parties, we have concluded in our review, suffered from both a lack of credibility and viability in people's perception. Added to this are specific state level factors in the Left's strongholds that led to an erosion of our electoral base. Thus, these results cannot be interpreted as a reflection of the Left's inability to comprehend or come to terms with neo-liberalism. If this was the case, then 2004 (where the Left's outside support was critical in bringing about the defeat of a government that had pursued neo-liberal policies and triumphantly claimed their deliverance of an 'India shining') would not have happened. This, however, is not to suggest that there are no new challenges posed by neo-liberalism and its specific trajectory in India. Indeed, there are such challenges that need to be addressed. I will return to this a little later.

II

Having made these preliminary remarks, let me begin with the conclusion that I shall strive to arrive at in this address. The Left's steadfast opposition to neo-liberalism and its equally committed championing of secularism, defines the future of India – India, as we know, today. The Left's future in India is, hence, inseparable with India's future.

Let me attempt to reason towards this substantive conclusion.

The Left had played and continues to play a critical role in the process of the *realization* of what has been called 'the idea of India'. What is this idea? It is the creation and consolidation of a unity in a multinational country. India's diversity – linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural etc – is incomparably vaster than in any other country in the

world. Officially it has been recorded that there are 1618 languages in India; 6400 castes; six major religions – four of them that originated indigenously; six anthropologically defined ethnic groups; and all this, politically administered through more than 30 states and union territories. A measure of this diversity is that India celebrates 29 major religio-cultural festivals and a larger number of religious holidays than any other country in the world.

Those who argue that it was the British that united this vast diversity ignore the fact that it was the British which engineered the partition of the sub-continent, leading to over a million deaths and a communal transmigration of a colossal order. British colonialism has a history of leaving behind disastrous legacies of *disunity* through the partition of countries – Palestine, Cyprus, apart from the Indian sub-continent. Far from the British uniting India, it is the pan-Indian people's struggle for freedom *against the British* that united this diversity and integrated more than 660 feudal princely states into modern India, giving shape to a genuinely 'national' consciousness. The Left had played an important role in this process of the realization of the idea of India.

Let me illustrate this with reference to three issues that continue to constitute the core of the idea of India.

First, the struggles on the land question unleashed by the Communists in various parts of the country – Punnappara Vayalar in Kerala; the Tehbagha movement in Bengal, the Surma Valley struggle in Assam, the Warli uprising in Maharashtra etc. – the highlight of which was the armed uprising in Telengana that brought the issue of land reforms to centre stage. The consequent abolition of the zamindari system and landed estates drew the vast mass of India's peasantry together into the project of building the idea of India.

Second, it was the Left that spearheaded the massive popular struggles for the linguistic reorganization of the states in independent India. The struggle for Vishalandhra, Aikya Kerala, and Samyukta Maharashtra were led, amongst others, by people who later emerged as communist stalwarts in the country. This paved the way for the integration of various linguistic nationalities that inhabit India into the process of realizing the idea of India.

Third, the Left's steadfast commitment to secularism was based on the recognition of a deep reality in India. The unity of India with its immense diversity can be maintained only by strengthening the bonds of commonality already *built into* this diversity and not by *imposing* any uniformity from above upon this diversity. While this is true for all attributes of India's social life, it is of critical importance in relation to religion. Following the partition of India and the horrendous communal aftermath, secularism became inseparable for the realization of the idea of India. The Indian ruling classes,

Neo-Liberalism, Secularism and the Future of the Left in India

Sitaram Yechury

however, went only half way in meeting the Left's objective of defining secularism as the separation of religion from politics. In practice, the Indian ruling classes have reduced this to define secularism as equality of all religions. This, in fact, contributes to providing sustenance to the communal forces.

The emergence of the conception of the idea of India arose from a continuous battle over these three issues that I have described against forces that would oppose each of these at all stages of the freedom movement as well as in post-Independence India. It was a three-fold battle over what ought to be the character of independent India. Linked to these three issues was a vital fourth element which was a unique contribution of the Left. The mainstream Congress vision had articulated that Independent India should be a secular democratic Republic. The Left, while wholly agreeing with this objective went further to envision that the political freedom of the country be extended to achieve the economic freedom of every individual, possible only under socialism.

Most antagonistic to both these was the opponent of the third vision which argued that the character of independent India should be defined by the religious affiliations of its people. This vision had a twin expression. The Muslim League championing the ideal of an Islamic State and the RSS championing the ideal of a Hindu *rashtra*. The former succeeded in the unfortunate partition of the country with all its consequences that continue to fester tensions till today. The latter having failed to achieve their objective at the time of independence continues with its efforts to transform modern India into their conception of a Hindu *rashtra*. In a sense the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions and the fourth supplement that I have mentioned. Needless to add the contours of this ongoing struggle will define the direction and content of the consolidation of the idea of India.

III

Let me invoke one of the illustrious alumni of Columbia University, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who is widely regarded as the architect of India's Constitution. On November 25, 1949 while presenting the draft Constitution for adoption in the Constituent Assembly, he said:

"On January 26, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one man-one vote and one vote-one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man-one value.

"How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?

"If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has laboriously built up."

The current neo-liberal trajectory that is being pursued by the Indian ruling classes exacerbates Dr. Ambedkar's concern. During the course of the day we have heard very enlightening presentations on the economic ruination of vast masses of the Indian people from Dr. Prabhat Patnaik, Dr.C.P. Chandrasekhar and Dr.Jayati Ghosh. I do not wish to rehearse their rich analysis. But the conclusions are fairly disconcerting. Embracing neo-liberalism has resulted in decisively ending the former dirigiste regime and trajectory employed by the Indian ruling classes in the early post-independence decades. Globally, the hallmark of neo-liberalism pursued by present day imperialism is the intensifying of the process of the primitive accumulation of capital through expropriation more than through appropriation. As Prabhat Patnaik calls it, this is accumulation through 'encroachment' as opposed to accumulation through expansion.

The neo-liberal trajectory has generated an acute agrarian crisis and distress through such merciless accumulation via expropriation. The net result is that there are two India's in the making today – one shining and one suffering.

Forbes magazine states that the number of billionaires in India doubled to 52 in 2009 and their combined net worth was \$ 276 billion or a quarter of the country's GDP. The fourth and the fifth richest persons in the world are Indians. On the other hand a Prime Minister appointed commission has reported that 77 per cent of Indian people or 836 million are living on less than Rs. 20 per day. Adjusted to purchasing power parity this tallies with the UN Human Development Report that estimates that 75.6 percent of Indians live on less than \$ 2 a day. Forty seven percent of our children are underweight due to malnutrition and 17 percent fail to make it to the age of 40. Seventy eight percent of our pregnant mothers are anemic. They are giving birth to India's future. This is the other – real – India.

This neo-liberal trajectory hence ruptures the process of the realization of the idea of India which can only happen on the foundation of universal prosperity.

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Sitaram Yechury

IV

The battle between the three visions that we spoke of earlier continues in India's political and social sphere. The vision of a Hindu *rashtra* was chillingly articulated by one of the RSS chiefs way back in 1939.

"In Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life."

"Consequently only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at re-building, re-vitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Nation. Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart; are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots".

He then continues

"...So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners".

And further:

"There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment - not even citizen's rights. There is at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, who have chosen to live in our country."

And, how should such 'old nations' deal? The adulation of fascist Germany could not have been more brazen:

"To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races - the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by."

Since the late 1980s the unfolding of this vision that reached a crescendo over the demand for temple construction at Ayodhya, leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, continues to express itself in a variety of issues which seek to communalize the polity in order to deform the modern secular democratic polity of India into a inherently intolerant theocratic State. The Gujarat carnage of 2002 exemplifies this deformation and continues to both shame and horrify the country's consciousness.

Such communalization strikes at the very roots of equality in India in a way different from (but allied with) the way in which neo-liberalism undermines equality. Clearly therefore, both neo-liberalism and communalism are the very antithesis of the idea of India. The Left's firm opposition to both is an important element in the realization of this idea of India. In order to achieve such a realization the Left would need to succeed in changing the structure of political forces amongst the Indian people in its favour. This, it is seeking to do by sharpening the *class* struggles within the country. On April 8, 2010, lakhs of people across the country will defy law to be arrested in protest against the unrelenting rise in prices of essential commodities. While such popular struggles will intensify in the days to come, there are also certain critical issues that the Left must come to terms with in order to strengthen itself and in the process strengthen the consolidation of modern India.

V

One such issue is the question of caste. Prof. Javed Alam had presented a very interesting paper this afternoon, which covered some of its main elements. I do not wish to repeat all those points either, but I will address some of the more central features of the question. Class formation in India occurs within the stratifications of caste that have been handed down through the centuries, and indeed it is fair to say that there is a very large overlap between caste and class, with the most exploited classes belonging to the most socially oppressed castes. Class rule in India thus stands on two legs

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– economic exploitation and social oppression. Unless the Left integrates the struggles on both these aspects, its advance can only be ‘limping instead of running’. While we are actually conscious of this need, in practice, such an integration has to be strengthened by the Left.

Another critical issue relates to the development paradigm that the Left-led state governments in India must undertake. I am told that ‘Nandigram’ and ‘Singur’ have become common in the international lexicon. There is, as is well known, a large amount of misinformation and deliberate propaganda in the campaigns against the Left Front government in West Bengal. Consider the following: Close to a thousand acres of land was acquired in Singur for the automobile factory. Over 12,000 individuals were given compensation for this land. 12,000 people for thousand acres of land, meaning 12 families were legally surviving on one acre of land. Is this possible? In reality, may be one or two families were cultivating while the rest were doing some odd jobs like pulling rickshaws or working as domestic help. Land and agriculture is no longer a viable option for improving their levels of livelihood. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the implementation of land reforms (unprecedented anywhere else except in Left ruled states) led to the fragmentation of land amongst the family members of two generations. Industrialization was considered as a way of improving livelihood standards on the grounds that it will generate employment and consequent economic activity that can provide opportunities to enhance the levels of quality of life. As far as Nandigram is concerned, no land was ever acquired and even the incomplete plans for the consideration of the establishment of a chemical hub were abandoned once disagreement was voiced. The trouble over there is entirely of a political nature, an issue of political polarization by the opponents of the Left Front who were and are desperate to see that the Left Front does not win the elections for the eighth successive time in 2011.

This is not the first time that land was acquired in West Bengal under the Left Front government. But this time around, in retrospect, it can be said that the required homework was not done as meticulously as it was done in the past. One reason was that these developments occurred soon after the Left Front returned to the state government for the seventh successive time in 2006. These elections were fought, amongst others, on the issue of industrialization. Since the Left Front won a resounding victory, it was presumed that the people endorsed the proposed industrialization drive. On earlier occasions, village level committees were formed with whom the state government negotiated the terms of land acquisition, while explaining the reasons and purpose for such acquisition. Only when the matters were settled did the process of acquisition begin. Such an approach would have eased a lot of misunderstanding and importantly would not have provided the

opponents of the Left Front with the opportunities to mount an offensive, using all sorts of unscrupulous means.

Singur and Nandigram, however, reflect a much larger question that is at stake. Given the constitutional limitations on state governments and the enormous pressure exercised by the Union Government to make all state governments subscribe to the neo-liberal trajectory, a question naturally arises whether the pursuit of 'development' and the opposition to neo-liberalism are compatible? The Left Front governments primarily aim to provide relief to the people while mounting the opposition to neo-liberalism. The latter requires these governments to prevent all forms of primitive accumulation of capital through expropriation such as the forcible dispossession of agricultural land from the peasants or the forcible curtailment of the activities of fishermen or the unrestricted and unregulated flow of foreign direct investment into the state, and so on. This may well, however, entail the restriction in the flow of resources in a situation where the states are already squeezed for resources under neo-liberalism. This, in turn, would restrict the scope and extent of developmental activities. Therefore the task of opposing neo-liberalism and its implications while utilizing available opportunities and formulating schemes at the state level within the limited means at the disposal of the state governments to provide succor to the basic classes against distress, is the hard challenge that the Left is currently engaged with.

The rise of identity politics and the activities of various NGOs in taking up specific issues such as universal education, rights of the disabled, rights of the dalits etc., or the ultra Left's ostensible articulation of the plight of the tribals, are invariably associated with the process of depoliticalisation. Identity politics can at best provide relief to that specific section of people but is never aimed at transcending the system. This is as true for the ultra Left, despite their strident calls for 'armed revolution'! The CPI(M)'s objective however is precisely to transcend the capitalist system.

VI

In order to strengthen the struggle for transcending the system the Left has to build and strengthen the worker-peasant alliance, the basic class alliance, for changing the structure of class forces amongst the people in its favour. As I said, this has to be built around strengthening opposition both against neo-liberalism and against communal forces. Anti-imperialism and secularism are a *joint* goal of the Left.

These fundamental goals, however, dictate immediate tasks in contexts that presently confront the Left. For instance, in order to strengthen secularism it would be necessary to prevent the communal forces from controlling the Union Government. At the same time, in order to strengthen

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the struggle against neo-liberalism it would be necessary to prevent the Congress party to assume the reins of government. Thus a combination of anti-BJP, anti-Congress political parties needs to be forged. More often such a front emerges at the time of elections without a set of credible alternative policies. Moreover, many such parties, on earlier occasions when in government in various states, have followed the very same neo-liberal policies or flirted with communal forces, thus making their credibility suspect. As distinct from such opportunistic electoral fronts, the Left seeks to strengthen an anti-BJP, anti-Congress political alternative that is based on genuinely secular anti-neo-liberal alternatives. This is an ongoing effort, which has to be based on developing popular struggles in this alternative policy direction. Many intermediate steps and measures would have to be taken to advance in this direction of changing the equation of class forces. They will have to be based on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

In the meanwhile, the biggest challenge that the Left is facing currently is the concerted attack being mounted by the ganging together of all anti-Left forces in our strongholds, especially in West Bengal. The all-in unity against the Left Front includes the ultra Left Maoists, the foreign funded NGOs, sections of the corporate media, the communal forces of both Hindu and Muslim hues under the leadership of the Congress-Trinamul alliance. As I stand here speaking to you nearly 200 of my comrades have been killed by such a gang in West Bengal alone. We have been through such attacks in the past, paid a heavy price by losing precious lives, but we have eventually emerged stronger.

The twin trajectories of neo-liberalism and communalism that confront us determine the immediate and intermediate tasks that I have been detailing. It is for this precise reason that all the forces that back these trajectories unite to attack and weaken the Left. This is not surprising since historically it is the Left alone that has stood up at *once* to *both* economic and social forms of oppression. History apart, this is the struggle that is currently ongoing in India. So, to return to the assertion that I made at the outset, the future of India and the future of the Left in India are inseparably and integrally interconnected.

Instead of neo-liberalism where economics drives politics, India requires a system where politics determines its economics. Instead of an exclusionary nationalism that communalism represents, India requires an inclusive nationalism. This is what the Left stands and works for. It alone can make us realize the idea of India.

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Notes on Neoliberalism and the Future of the Left

C.P. Chandrasekhar

This note deals with some implications for the Left of the rise to dominance of neoliberal ideology in India over the last two decades. Though neoliberal ideology encompasses the social, political and cultural spheres as well, for reasons related to my own limited competence I concentrate on neoliberal ideology and practice in the economic sphere. I attempt to examine the implications of the dominance of that ideology and related policies and practices for the future of what I loosely term the Left Economic Discourse in India and the future of Left political practice in the country.

Neoliberalism is of course an ambiguous and loosely defined term, even when restricted to the economic sphere. So it would be useful to clarify the sense in which it is being used in this context. In what follows, neoliberal theory and practice are taken as referring to: (i) the use of the rhetoric of market fundamentalism, in which the market or ostensibly “free economic exchange” is presented as the most efficient mechanism to work the economic system, to pave the way for the increasingly unfettered functioning of private capital, both domestic and foreign; (ii) the use of the notion of a minimalist state, to be realised by dismantling its developmentalist version, to legitimise the shift of various terms of trade and mechanisms of distribution in favour of the owners of capital and their functionaries and conceal the conversion of segments of the state apparatus into sites for primitive accumulation; and (iii) the pursuit of a regime of accumulation where, the home market and deficit-financed state expenditure are replaced by exports and debt-financed private expenditure as the principal stimuli to growth.¹

As has been noted often, the rise of neoliberalism has been coterminous with the rise to dominance of finance in the developed industrial world and the global economy. Neoliberalism and financial globalisation feed on each other. Since the liberalisation of trade and of the rules governing the cross-border flows of capital result, in the first instance, in a widening of the trade and current account in the balance of payments of the liberalising economy, access to foreign capital to finance that deficit is a prerequisite for “successful” liberalisation that is not aborted by a balance of payments crisis. Thus, the pursuit of a neoliberal economic strategy is infeasible in a

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world where the access to international finance to developing countries is severely limited. On the other hand, foreign capital favours environments where markets and private capital are allowed free rein. Once trade and investment rules are liberalised to attract foreign capital, domestic controls on the operations of capital need to be diluted or dismantled. This includes controls on the operation of financial markets and firms with implications for the financial system and economic structure.

The neoliberal order has associated with it a set of outcomes that lend credibility to the Left agenda. It leads to periodic crises of varying intensity, triggered by developments in capital, credit and/or currency markets, resulting in slow growth, rising unemployment and increased deprivation. The livelihood of those dependent on agriculture, which is home to much of the labouring poor, deteriorates and is even endangered. The free rein given to private capital results in predatory practices, as in forestry and the mining industry for example, that has devastating effects on the already poor and the marginalised. It alters the form and curtails the volume of state spending, adversely affecting the degree to which the welfare expenditures of the state can redress these negative outcomes for a large section of the population. Overall, a neoliberal trajectory implies that the surpluses extracted from the productive sectors increase, damaging the livelihoods of the working people engaged in these sectors. The fact that even in the case of countries successfully pursuing a neoliberal trajectory decent jobs are scarce and inequality and poverty are on the rise, discredits this path of capitalist development.

These then become focal points for mobilisation. Further, in any given context or country, the success of neoliberalism is inevitably transient with the neoliberal frontier shifting continuously. It moved from Latin America to Asia and within Asia from the second-tier newly industrialising countries to countries like India. So though success may be striking, it has thus far been transient, and the subsequent decline can be sudden and traumatic, as for example in Argentina. This then provides the seedbed for the revival of the Left project.

The absence of "actually existing socialism"

The resulting opportunity to advocate and advance the Left agenda is, however, counteracted by other developments associated with neoliberalism, rendering the tasks of the Left far more difficult in the current conjuncture. The overarching constraint is of course the effect on the ideology and practice of the Left of the collapse more than two decades ago of actually existing socialisms in many countries of the world, especially the erstwhile Soviet Union. That collapse was partly the result of the rise of globalised finance and

its influence even outside the capitalist world order. While a host of internal contradictions and developments paved the way for an increase in dependence on foreign capital and the weakening of the planning principle in the centrally planned economies, the specific form their final decline took was not unrelated to the "encirclement" by finance serving as an instrument of imperialism. Socialism, because of this denouement, was declared a "failure", rather than the loser in an ongoing struggle. This makes the effort to establish the legitimacy of the socialist alternative even when capitalism is discredited (as during the recent crisis) fraught with difficulties.

There is an additional difficulty. Analyses of the causes for the collapse of the centrally planned socialist economies have raised questions which make it difficult to define what constitutes a socialist economy. These analyses of the "failure" of actual attempts to implement coordinated investment decision-making have one feature in common. This is an emphasis on the institutional weaknesses associated with centralised investment decision-making as a system of economic governance. These weaknesses are said to be of many kinds.

First, the system presumes that central planners have adequate access to the wide and enormous range of information required to execute their implicit brief. This "informational inadequacy" arises only partly because of the difficulties involved in creating a framework which allows for the collection, collation and transmission of the required information at a fast enough pace. It also results from the fact that agents at lower levels of implementation and governance may choose to hold back and not transmit crucial information or even find incentives for transmitting partial or incorrect information, which puts the whole mechanism in threat.

This leads up to the second inadequacy, which is the belief that either the objectives and goals of agents at all levels of decision-making or implementation (including shop-floor workers or workers in agricultural cooperatives or state-owned farms) are common or that all agents can be made to adopt the objectives considered appropriate by the central planners. The potential lack of uniformity of objectives among agents whose structural position in the system differs is of significance because the conventional means under capitalism of trying to impose discipline through closures, retrenchment and lay-offs and the threat of the sack, does not operate under socialism. This problem has always been recognised in the traditional discourse on planning, which considered politics to be the key to realising correct and consistent decisions at lower levels of decision-making. Consensus among the majority around the political agenda, seen as a requirement to put in place the system of central planning itself, and the ability to use that consensus to enforce non-financial penalties for deviance,

were seen as adequate to ensure commonality in objectives pursued by different agents. In practice, it is clear, that the extreme difficulty in keeping in place a consensus, created in the course of transiting to a system of central planning, and of detecting deviance and enforcing penalties, was substantially underestimated.

Finally, there is a real danger of "bureaucratisation" at the higher levels of decision making, which may not be easily confronted by the political environment, since very often the same agents are arbiters of the acceptable politics of the day. Such bureaucratisation, could not only lead to wrong investment decisions, influenced by sectional rather than societal interests, but could also lead to objectives and rules which are set not because they are perceived by the planners as being socially accepted, but to those which are considered best by the planners themselves, and not necessarily always from a societal point of view. Even if consumer sovereignty, which presumes that individuals are the best judges of what is good for themselves is a notion that can be dispensed with, some means to ensure the incorporation of individual priorities and desires when deciding on the volume and pattern of consumption should be provided for, if individuals are not to be alienated from the system.

Irfan Habib (1993) summed up the consequences of centralisation as follows: "Who controls the socialist state (and how) is the crucial question determining the destiny of socialism. When socialism is established there is no blind economic 'law' which would take socialist society in one particular direction, that of advance. There are policy alternatives at every step; and the choice can always be coloured by group, sectional, and (ultimately) the choice-makers' own interest as distinct from, and therefore, possibly opposed to, the interest of the people at large."

These and other questions raised by the collapse of actually existing socialism have made the definition of the alternative society difficult. This, however, is not a new problem. As Maurice Dobb had noted long years back, the line separating the province of centralised and decentralised decision making in planned economies has to be decided in practice, and cannot be defined *a priori*. Demanding an *a priori* definition of a more egalitarian order is one more way of delegitimising the search for it, since the context would define the appropriate combination of state and markets.

What can be said is that the experience with actually existing planned economies does make the task of delineating the "planning principle" that is counterpoised to the market mechanism and defending a substantial role for the state that much more difficult. And since the state must play a role in shaping and sustaining more egalitarian systems, this does "delay" the fruition of the "socialist" project, since it not only postpones the proximate

dates on which the milestones on the road to socialism may be crossed, but leaves unfinished the task of defining contours of the alternative society.

This makes the task of the Left that much more difficult. If neoliberalism is worsening the living conditions of the poor and the working people and socialism is both difficult to define and not patently imminent, then the immediate tactics and practice of the Left must incorporate elements of welfarism, or actions aimed at providing some succour to the poor. Recognising this, neoliberalism seeks to legitimise itself by packaging its ideology with new views of justice, new ways to define development and new policies to give development a human face. Neoliberal policies are presented as unavoidable if growth that generates surpluses to distribute is to be achieved; but distribution itself, it is argued, must be dealt with independently of growth. If this is the form that neoliberal rhetoric takes, then the immediate task placed before the Left of fighting to deliver welfare benefits to the working people and the poor gives it the external image of saying much the same. This requires it to seek ways of focusing on the more structural and class based analysis of and solutions to the challenges faced by the working people.

On the other hand, the setback to the progress of the Left and the rise of neoliberalism that devastates the poor creates another consequence for Left practice. Much of the Left's energies are directed in the current conjuncture to efforts at arresting and reversing the march of neoliberalism. This could divert attention from identifying the classes, mobilisation of which would deliver the social sanction and the political support needed to transcend the neoliberal order.

Neoliberalism in Asia

Add to all this the possibility of the transient success of neoliberalism in particular contexts, and the challenge to the Left is indeed immense. In the current global conjuncture, India constitutes the country which epitomises the "success" of cautious and properly sequenced neoliberalism. For this reason, the focus on India in this note, even when warranted by the subject of this symposium, can be justified on more substantial grounds. "Success" here is used in a limited sense and refers to the ability to sustain significantly high rates of GDP growth for reasonably long periods of time without running into balance of payments difficulties. It has little to do with employment and distributional outcomes which are clearly worse than during the interventionist, import substitution years. The other country referred to as a neoliberal success is, of course, China, which too is providing a greater role for the market. But China's case is different inasmuch as its legacy of socialized property and relative egalitarianism, besides a State which is more

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in control and interventionist, makes it a special case. The Chinese state is consciously seeking to accommodate and expand the sphere of market-mediated and driven relationships, and is not easily labelled neoliberal even when more "market-friendly". India, without a similar socialist legacy and level of state control and intervention serves better as a neoliberal example.

The perception of India's success as a neoliberal experiment is significant because it occurs in a country with a strong Left movement and comes at a time when elsewhere in the underdeveloped world neoliberalism has lost much of its legitimacy and the search for alternatives is on in both theory and practice. In fact till a little more than a decade back the Asian continent, excluding China, was presented as an instance of successful capitalist development, based on an appropriate mix of state and markets and led by a developmentalist state. On the other hand, the African continent was seen as having been devastated in the course of its enforced and unrestrained integration with the rest of the world, to an extent where even the state in most African countries was damaged and rendered ineffectual. This experience was hardly the basis for the endorsement of neoliberalism as a strategy of development. And, in Latin America, while import substitution and subsequent export orientation (in countries like Brazil) were till the 1980s seen as signalling successful engagement with the capitalist world system, the shift to neoliberalism in the 1970s and after and the associated onset of the debt and balance of payments crises since the 1980s led to the lost decades that completely discredited the neoliberal project.

It was in Asia on the other hand that the project of finding alternative ways in which underdeveloped, post-colonial countries can develop by engaging with capitalism was seen to have been successfully pursued. There was, to start with, the benchmark Japanese model of combining state and market, and then the experience of the first tier newly industrialising countries (especially South Korea) with their developmentalist states and mercantilist strategies. The initial signs of neoliberalism came when the potential for these kinds of strategies exhausted themselves in East Asia and when the success of Japan and South Korea provided the base for neoliberal strategies in the second and subsequent-tier industrialisers exploiting foreign investment and relocative capital. China and India are only recent examples of countries pursuing market-friendly development strategies.

Because of the delayed arrival of neoliberalism, unlike Africa and South America, the Asian continent was seen as challenging the notion that there were binding constraints on the development of capitalism in late-industrialising developing, especially ex-colonial, countries. What was telling was that the shift to neoliberalism in the most successful Asian "miracle countries" paved the way for the crisis of 1997. But because of past successes

and the emergence of China and India, the fact that the financial crisis in Southeast Asia in 1997, coming in the aftermath of financial liberalisation, was early evidence of the failure of the neoliberal project in the Asian continent, was underplayed. The cases of China and India, especially the latter, are used to still advance the argument that emerging Asia is the new capitalist and neoliberal frontier.

It is indeed true that many countries in Asia, particularly India, benefited from a late start. They could therefore be more cautious in their approach to neoliberal reform. But this point should not be stretched to argue that the Indian government is less neoliberal in inclination. India, which moved on to the neoliberal trajectory after a balance of payments crisis in 1991, was on the verge of dismantling almost all of its capital controls and rendering the rupee convertible around 1997, when the financial crisis hit Asia and sent out a message on the dangers of liberalising capital controls. That forced the Indian government to drop the initiative, and save itself from difficulties of the kind that had afflicted countries that had substantially diluted controls on capital flows. More recently, the Indian government had begun to accelerate financial sector reform and would have gone much further, but for the fact that the financial crisis in the US, UK and Europe drove home the dangers of a retreat from structural regulation to one based on financial flexibility combined with a regulatory framework involving capital adequacy requirements, "good" accounting practices, disclosure norms and behavioural guidelines. However, with the crisis still not behind us, the government has returned to pushing its project of financial sector reform. The absence of failure forecloses learning from third country experience and is seen to justify the trajectory of neoliberal reform.

The implications of neoliberal "success"

The experience with neoliberalism in late-entrants like India, serves to isolate the Left at a time when the task of "relegitimising" the socialist project has never been as difficult before. In the post-Independence years, right upto the 1970s, the nationalist, anti-imperialist project endowed policy discourse with a "Left flavour". Freedom from foreign capital and "self-reliance" were on everybody's agenda. So was the need to limit the concentration of wealth and assets, implement land reforms and redress extreme income inequality. The relative commitment of the Left and the centre to this kind of development project and their perceptions of how to realise it varied, but the debate was never substantially about objectives.

One implication of this was that when the failure to implement structural reform resulted in a crisis in post-independence economic development, once the opportunities for expansion of cultivated area and

import-substitution had exhausted themselves, there were only two directions to go: one was to seek in technology the answer to the problem of slow productivity increase, which was what the Green Revolution did; the other was to return to the unfinished agenda of structural reform, which was what the rhetoric of restricting monopoly through the MRTP Act, nationalising banking and "*Garibi hatao*" claimed to be attempting. Recourse to market fundamentalism and external liberalisation was not even considered since it was patently infeasible. Among the options available, the Left alternative was more weighty and well formulated.

The de-legitimisation of the socialist project and the still continuing "success" of neoliberalism has isolated the Left in its discourse, with sections of the so-called centre, including those in the judiciary and the media, now adopting the discourse of the Right rather than of the Left. Increasingly it is not just the path but the objectives of development that are seen differently from the Left by much of the intelligentsia. Despite lack of supporting evidence, a view has gained ground that if the neoliberal project could be appropriately tweaked to suit country characteristics and high growth ensured for, say, a decade, then the exit out of underdevelopment is ensured. Inequality may increase, but poverty can be dealt with through public action. This departure from a Left perspective has been aided by the fact that in its phases of success, neoliberalism is able to and even relies on an expansion of consumption among the upper middle classes. Even when offered "contractual" employment with self-funded social security, leading sections of the middle class are bought off with high salaries and opportunities for credit-financed consumption. That offer is not the result of largesse to the middle class, but is part of the change in the regime of accumulation in neoliberal strategies, which has as its fall-out the cooption of a section of the erstwhile middle class. This deprives the Left of the support of some of the most vocal and articulate voices of dissent and protest it relied on in the past. The consequences are quite startling. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, the threat or actual realisation of "double-digit inflation" could bring down governments at the central and state levels in democratic India. Today, even food price inflation of 20 percent evokes only limited protest and often with an inexplicable lag. This lethargy in protest induced by the "middle class cross-over" to the defence of neoliberalism is another cause for the Left's isolation.

This isolation is intensified by the financialisation of the media at an institutional and individual level. The media in India, especially television but also sections of the print media is now directly or through the activities of subsidiaries or sister firms of media enterprises, exposed to the stock market. And through investments and stock options so are its well paid senior

personnel. The media therefore has a stake in a neoliberal strategy that privileges finance, makes the performance of financial markets an indicator of economic health and is designed to ensure high returns to rentiers and financial investors. The net result is a propagandist promotion of neoliberalism and visceral attacks on those who oppose it in large parts of the media. This turns an important instrument of dissemination of information and ideas into an instrument to promote the neoliberal agenda.

Finally, the relationship between the rise of finance capital and the rise of neoliberalism has one other implication for the Left or socialist project. As noted earlier, this relationship inevitably results in the increased presence of and dependence on foreign capital in countries pursuing neoliberal strategies. And any effort to challenge and/or reverse neoliberal economic policies inevitably leads to the exit of portfolio and "footloose" productive capital, precipitating a crisis of sorts that must be endured if an alternative strategy is to be experimented with. This not only worsens the conditions of the poor, but also gives rise to the view that any attempts at a transition to some form of an alternative to neoliberalism would lead to capital flight and precipitate a crisis, making the alternative impracticable in the new world dominated by finance. This does constitute an important roadblock to the adoption of such strategies when the transition is no longer normally based on revolutionary change but on the ascendance to power of the Left through democratic means. It also allows the Left project to be branded as impracticable.

Put all of this together and the environment in which the Left operates is extremely unfavourable, despite persisting evidence of the inequalising and crisis-prone nature of contemporary capitalism. The message therefore is clear. The future of the Left in contexts like India depends on breaking this isolation by innovative theory and practice that exploit the opportunity that rising inequality, increasing underemployment and periodic crisis under neoliberalism provides. That of course is easier said than done.

Implications for political practice

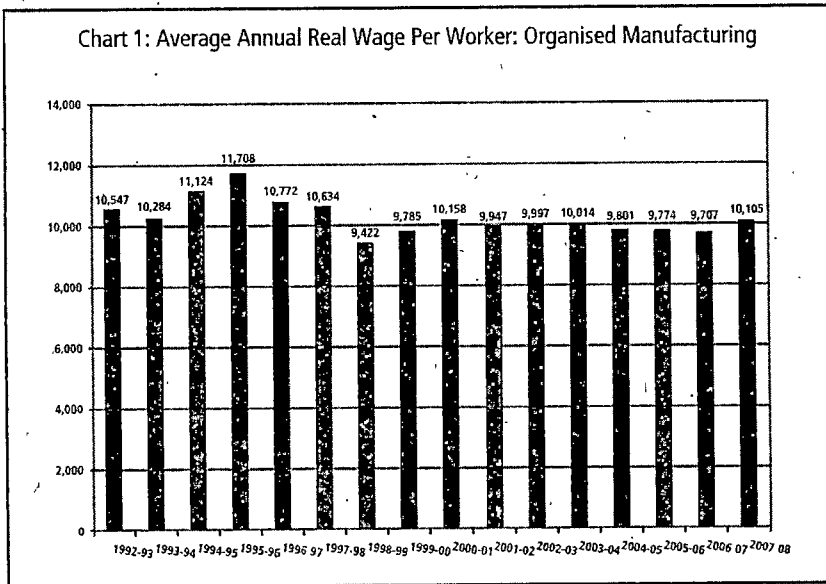
The difficulty is that even when at an ideological level the Left is to an extent isolated, structural factors increase that isolation. To start with, neoliberal development obliterates the "vanguard" in multiple ways. Principally, the numbers of the organised working class does not increase. Within wage employment, organised employment in environments that favour the growth of collective consciousness is the exception. Despite some differences of opinion arising from discrepancies in figures available from different sources², there is broad agreement that high GDP growth in India has not been accompanied by any noticeable expansion of decent work



opportunities for India's relatively young labour force. Estimates made by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) provide a much clearer picture of employment in the organized sector than available hitherto. It makes the much needed distinction between "employment in the organized sector" (defined to include all enterprises employing ten or more workers with power or 20 or more workers without power that are seen as subject to the Factories Act) and "organized employment", or employment that has associated with it a minimum of employment, work and social security. If organized employment is taken to consist of all employment in units that fall under the formal sector definition, then such employment is estimated to have risen from 54.1 million to 62.6 million between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. However, if the definition is restricted to "organized workers" in the organized sector, then "formal" employment in the organized sector had fallen marginally from 33.7 million in 1999-00 to 33.4 million in 2004-05. This compares with total employment of 361.7 million and 422.6 million respectively on these two dates (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector 2007: Table 1.1, 4). With the share of manufacturing employment in total employment having remained near-stagnant at 12.1 and 12.9 per cent respectively during these two years (Planning Commission, Government of India 2008: Table 4.2, 66), we can safely conclude that the manufacturing sector's contribution to organized employment is not just small relative to the total, but must have stagnated or declined. In sum, even when employment is in the organised sector, the nature of employment becomes informal and insecure, encouraging workers to turn away from unionisation and even organised protest.

Stagnant or declining employment and insecure tenure discourage those with jobs from organising and risking loss of their positions to informally engaged workers drawn from the reserve of the unemployed. Not surprisingly, unionism is on the decline and the effort to organise workers even to fight economic struggles, let alone transcend them, is proving increasingly difficult. The effect of all this is visible in the stagnation of the real wage in the organised industrial sector (Chart 1) at a time when productivity is rising rapidly (Chart 2). This has meant a sharp fall in the share of wages in value added in the organised manufacturing sector (Chart 3), which is where the traditional vanguard class of the Left resides. This is of significance because the conditions of workers in the organised sector provided the benchmark for where wages and working conditions should move towards. If those conditions stagnate and deteriorate the task of mobilising the unorganised, which has become structurally crucial for the advance of the Left, is that much more difficult.

It is in this background that the debate on labour market flexibility should be assessed. As reasonable voices have never tired of stressing, those among India's working class who have any degree of security of tenure and social security benefits are a miniscule minority. To argue in such a context that labour laws are a major impediment to development of the country, as the neoliberal ideologues do, seems to border on the senseless. But it is in one sense not. For what it does is prevent the workers from outside the fortress that houses the permanently and securely employed to move into the fortress, by challenging the legitimacy of higher-wage, organised employment using arguments varying from discriminatory protection for an elite to damaging consequences for investment.



The effort to weaken, privatise and dismantle the public sector is a piece of this conspiracy. The public sector, by offering security of tenure and subjecting that security to parliamentary scrutiny, creates a working class section that is willing to fight on both economic and political issues. In fact, the resistance to neoliberal financial policies has been led by public sector workers in the banking and insurance industries. This is what the attack on the public sector seeks to undermine, even when handing over lucrative businesses to private capital at discounted prices. To the extent that the transient success of neoliberalism allows this to proceed, it undermines the cause of the Left.

Notes on Neoliberalism and the Future of the Left

C.P. Chandrasekhar

Chart 2
Value Added Per Worker at Constant 1999-00 Prices: Organised Manufacturing

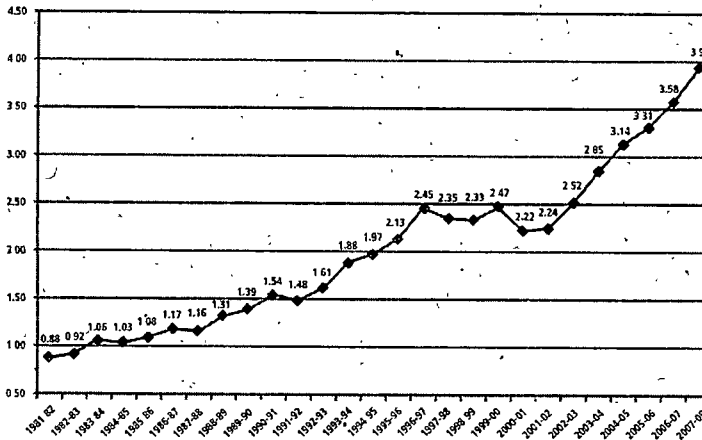
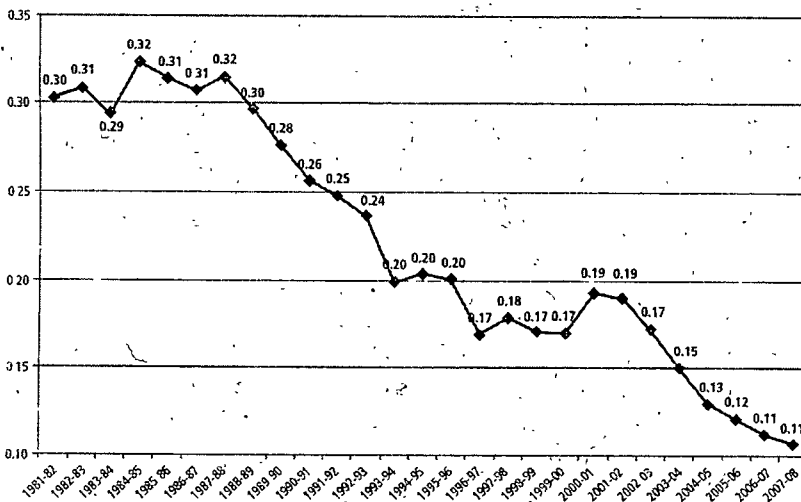


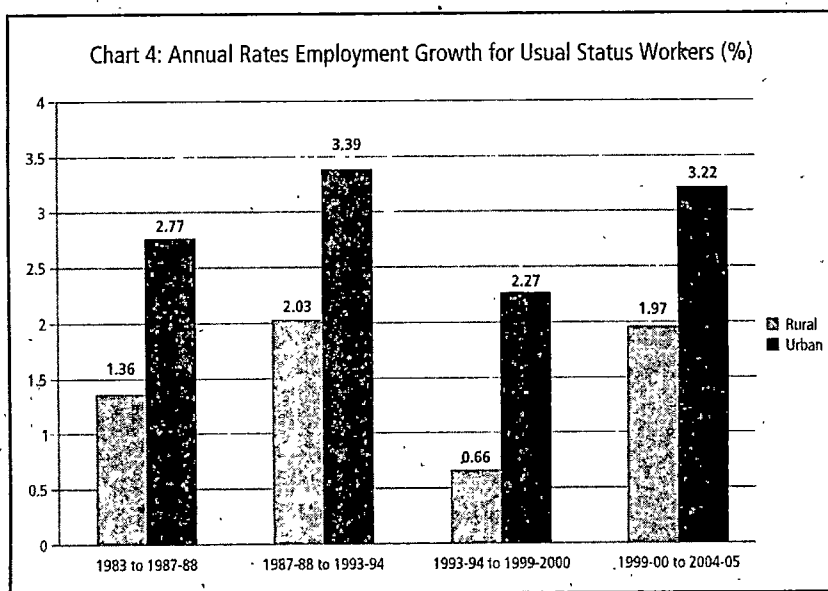
Chart 3: Ratio of Wages to Net Value Added in Organised Manufacturing



This enfeeblement of the working class is furthered by the fact that across the economy as a whole wage employment is being displaced by self employment, creating a situation where for much of the disadvantaged there is no immediate agent to hold responsible for their conditions of work and

standard of living. The 61st Round of the NSS that surveyed employment in 2004-05, suggests that there have been notable changes in the employment patterns and conditions of work in India over the first half of this decade, with indications of a revival of employment growth. The first important change from the previous period (1993-94 to 1999-2000) relates to aggregate employment growth itself. The late 1990s was a period of quite dramatic deceleration of aggregate employment generation, which fell to the lowest rate recorded since such data began being collected in the 1950s. However, the most recent period indicates a recovery, as shown in Chart 4.

While aggregate employment growth (calculated at compound annual rates) in both rural and urban India was still slightly below the rates recorded in the period 1987-88 to 1993-94, it clearly recovered sharply from the deceleration of the 1993-94 to 1999-00 period. The recovery was most marked in rural areas, where the earlier slowdown had been sharper.



Characteristics of employment

However, one of the more interesting features that emerge from these data is the shift in the type of employment. There has been a significant decline in wage employment in general. While regular employment had been declining as a share of total usual status employment for some time now (except for urban women workers), wage employment had continued to grow in share because employment on casual contracts had been on the

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increase. But the latest survey round suggests that even casual employment has fallen in proportion to total employment.

The fallout of this is a very significant increase in self-employment among all categories of workers in India. The increase has been sharpest among rural women, where self-employment now accounts for nearly two-thirds of all jobs. But it is also remarkable for urban workers, both men and women, among whom the self-employed constitute 45 and 48 percent respectively, of all usual status workers.

In sum, around half of the work force in India currently does not work for a direct employer. This is true not only in agriculture, but increasingly in a wide range of non-agricultural activities. This in turn requires a significant rethinking of how the Left deals with the the working class. For example, how does one ensure decent conditions of work when the absence of a direct employer means that self-exploitation by workers in a competitive market is the greater danger? How does it mobilise when much of the working poor do not face an immediate enemy and more often than not the State is seen as both saviour and oppressor? And how does it prevent this vaguely directed struggle from finding expression in retrograde forms of sectional, casteist and communal politics?

Thus, at a time when the Left is bereft of support from a socialist bloc and when neoliberalism remains dominant, even if wounded, the Left has been called upon to fundamentally rethink its strategy and tactics. It must be said that these questions are not new to the Indian Left. It has had a long history of being involved in peasant struggles, in forging alliances between the peasantry and agricultural workers and in getting working class organisations involved in organised informal sector workers. In Kerala, for example, the Left has not only registered major successes in organising "informal sector workers" in the coir and *beedi* industries, but also with experimenting with institutional forms such as cooperatives to ensure the viability of these units when abandoned by private owners in the aftermath of unionisation. It has also experimented with new forms of economic and political governance by putting in place panchayati raj institutions and attempting to make decentralised economic decision making and planning a social movement. But consciousness alone is not enough. The challenges are immense and the road ahead long and arduous. Even the transient successes of neoliberalism are partly because of this context in which the Left has to reinvent itself.

But let us be clear. The argument here is not that the Left has no future. In fact, neoliberalism renders that future both real and imperative. All that is being said is that the transition to that future is not inevitable but requires much by way of theory and practice. The struggle to ensure the transition is not one for the fainthearted.

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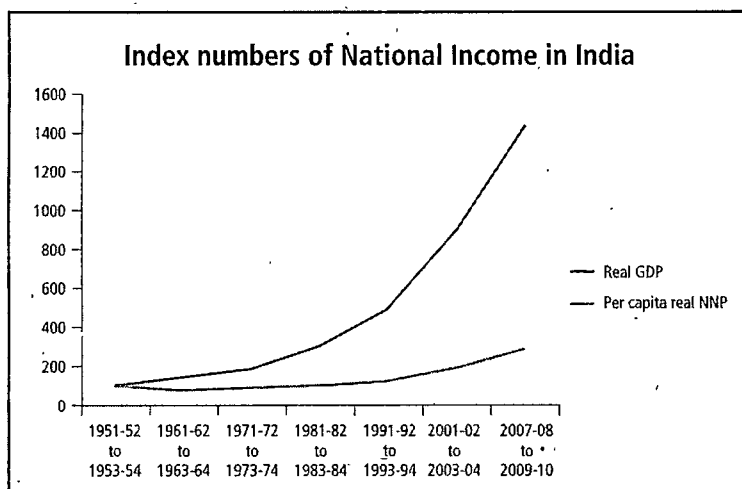
- 1 This is because inequality of asset ownership and incomes limits the expansion of an income-driven, mass consumption market at home; and dependence on finance limits deficit-financed, public expenditure.
- 2 The reference here is to figures from the Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and the employment and unemployment survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation.

Social processes in the Indian accumulation story

Jayati Ghosh

India is currently in the midst of an economic boom that has been relatively prolonged, with a confident capitalist class increasingly taking on the world not only in exports but also through investment abroad; euphoria in the financial markets; and growing self-confidence among the elite, professional and middle classes. India is increasingly regarded (along with China) as one of the “success stories” of globalisation, likely to emerge into a giant economy in the twenty-first century. This perception has been bolstered by the apparent ability of the Indian economic growth process to withstand the worst effects of the global financial crisis, and to experience only a minor slowdown of output growth rather than any actual decline in national income. The subsequent post-recession resurgence has further reinforced the idea that the Indian economy is now capable of rapid expansion on its own steam, and led some to argue that it can become (along with China) an alternative growth pole in the global economy.

As Chart 1 indicates, both aggregate GDP and per capita national income (in constant price terms) have increased in the past two



Source: RBI Basic Statistics on the Indian Economy, 2010

decades, with aggregate income showing particularly sharp increases. Per capita Net National Product was largely stagnant in the first three decades after Independence, but has increased since the early 1980s, aided by the decline in rates of population growth.

So from one perspective, which tends to be the dominant one among mainstream media and policy makers, the expectations generated by more than six decades of independence have been at least partially met, in terms of a vibrant democracy on the move, especially in economic terms.

However, there are many reasons why this is at best a partial, and at worst a very misleading, perception of the Indian economic reality. This is true not just because of the fact that economic growth has not been accompanied by much improvement in basic social and human development indicators. It is also because the recent economic growth experience is on based on a relatively fragile pattern of external dependence that may be hard to sustain over the medium term.

Recent high economic growth in India was related to financial deregulation that sparked a retail credit boom and combined with fiscal concessions to spur consumption among the richest sections of the population. This led to rapid increases in aggregate GDP growth, even as deflationary fiscal policies, poor employment generation and persistent agrarian crisis reduced wage shares in national income and kept mass consumption demand low. There was a substantial rise in profit shares in the economy and the proliferation of financial activities. As a result, finance and real estate accounted for nearly 15 percent of GDP in 2007-08. This combined with rising asset values to enable a credit-financed consumption splurge among the rich and the middle classes especially in urban areas. And this in turn generated higher rates of investment and output over the upswing. The earlier emphasis on public spending as the principal stimulus for growth in the Indian economy was thus substituted in the 1990s with debt-financed housing investment and private consumption of the elite and burgeoning middle classes.

The recent Indian growth story in its essentials was therefore not unlike the story of speculative bubble-led expansion that marked the experience of several other developed and developing countries in the same period (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2010). Both history and comparative experience tell us that such a trajectory is inevitably marked by instability, unevenness and greater vulnerability to internally and externally generated financial crises.

So the recent boom has been fundamentally dependent upon greater global integration, not just in trade of goods and service, but even more significantly with respect to internationally mobile finance capital that chose

to make India one of its favoured destinations among emerging markets. The dependence of GDP growth upon largely debt-fuelled consumption of a relatively small segment of the population rather than mass demand means a more limited and ultimately more fragile domestic market. Export growth in software, IT-enabled services and some manufactures remains high but export-oriented employment is simply not large enough to counter the effects of inadequate productive employment generation in domestic sectors. High rates of investment continue to be driven by expectations of rapid growth of the domestic market as well as very substantial fiscal sops in the form of tax incentives and implicit subsidies, but these cannot increase beyond a point. Most of all, bubbles, whether they are driven by inflows of foreign capital or by domestic credit expansion to chosen sectors, are liable to burst, and the most adverse consequences are usually felt by those (such as workers) who did not really gain much in the period of boom.

But it is not only the fact that such growth is part of a credit-driven bubble that is a problem. It is the other major feature of the growth process, of the lack of spread of its benefits, which is probably of greater concern. In fact, to paraphrase Charles Dickens, while these are the best of times for some, they are also the worst of times for others (which may well include the majority of Indians) because of the growing dichotomy in conditions of living. While this has been an unfortunate feature of the Indian development process since the start, it has reached newer and sharper levels in terms of inequality and material insecurity in the past decade.

Taking a long view, there are some clear achievements of the Indian economy since Independence – most crucially the emergence of a reasonably diversified economy with an industrial base. The past twenty five years have also witnessed rates of aggregate GDP growth that are high compared to the past and also compared with several other parts of the developing world. Significantly, this higher aggregate growth has thus far been accompanied by macroeconomic stability, with the absence of extreme volatility in the form of financial crises such as have been evident in several other emerging markets. There has also been some reduction (although not very rapid) in income poverty.

However, there are also some clear failures of this growth process even from a long run perspective. Despite more than six decades of independence, the development project is nowhere near completion in India. It is also clear that over time, some elements of that project seem even less likely to be achieved than in the past, despite relatively rapid economic growth. An important failure is the worrying absence of structural change, in terms of the ability to shift the labour force out of low productivity activities, especially in agriculture, to higher productivity and better remunerated activities.

Agriculture continues to account for well above half of the total work force and more than two-thirds of the rural work force (NSSO 2010) even though its share of GDP is now less than 15 percent (CSO National Accounts Statistics 2010). In the past decade and a half, agrarian crisis across many parts of the country has impacted adversely on the livelihood of both cultivators and rural workers, such that cultivation is barely viable especially in the rain-fed parts of the country. Yet the generation of more productive employment outside this sector remains woefully inadequate.

Other major failures, which are directly reflective of the still poor status of human development in most parts of the country, are in many ways related to this fundamental failure of structural transformation. These include: the persistence of widespread poverty; the absence of basic food security for a significant proportion of the population and indeed evidence of growing food insecurity in terms of nutritional outcomes; the inability to ensure basic needs of housing, sanitation, adequate health care to the population as a whole; the continuing inability to ensure universal education and the poor quality of much school education; the sluggish enlargement of access to education and employment across different social groups and for women in particular. In addition there are problems caused by the very pattern of economic growth: aggravated regional imbalances; greater inequalities in the control over assets and in access to incomes; dispossession and displacement without adequate compensation and rehabilitation.

Seen in this light, it becomes apparent that a basic feature of the process of economic development in India has been exclusion: exclusion from control over assets; exclusion from the benefits of economic growth; exclusion from the impact of physical and social infrastructure expansion; exclusion from education and from income-generating opportunities. This exclusion has been along class or income lines, by geographical location, by caste and community, and by gender. However, exclusion from these benefits has not meant exclusion from the system as such – rather, those who are supposedly marginalised or excluded have been affected precisely because they have been incorporated into market systems. We therefore have a process of exclusion through incorporation, a process that has actually been typical of capitalist accumulation across the world, especially in its more dynamic phases. In fact, this process of simultaneous incorporation and exclusion has been especially marked in the recent phase of rapid accumulation over the past two decades, when the Indian economy has been viewed globally as “a success story”.

Thus, peasants facing a crisis of viability of cultivation have been integrated into a market system that has made them more reliant on purchased inputs in deregulated markets while becoming more dependent

upon volatile output markets in which state protection is completely inadequate. The growing army of “self-employed” workers, who now account for more than half of our work force, have been excluded from paid employment because of the sheer difficulty of finding jobs, but are nevertheless heavily involved in commercial activity and exposed to market uncertainties in the search for livelihood. Those who have been displaced by developmental projects or other processes, and subsequently have not found adequate livelihood in other activities, are victims of the process of economic integration, though excluded from the benefits.

In terms of employment patterns, the recent economic growth process in India exhibits a problem which is increasingly common throughout the developing world: the apparent inability of even high rates of output growth to generate sufficient opportunities for “decent work” to meet the needs of the growing labour force. This has been widely noted in the literature on the basis of both the data emerging from the 2001 Census and the more comprehensive data from the National Sample Survey Organisation (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2006, Sharma 2006, Sundaram 2007) and therefore there is no need to repeat the evidence here. Nevertheless, it is still worth noting some of the more significant features of recent employment trends. First, the deceleration and stagnation of formal employment growth despite accelerated output growth, and the lower intensity of employment in the most dynamic manufacturing and services sub-sectors (Kannan and Raveendran 2009, Arora 2010). Second, the stagnation of real wages of almost all categories of workers, despite rapid increases in labour productivity in some sectors, as well as rapid increases in GDP growth as a whole. This has also been associated with increasing gender gaps in wages (Ghosh 2009). Third, the increase in labour force participation rates for both men and women, including both those who are actively engaged in work and those who are unemployed but looking for work, which incorporates the net effect of declining rates of labour force participation among the youth (age group 15-29 years) and a rise for the older age cohorts. Finally, shifts in the type of employment, with declines in the proportion of all forms of wage employment and corresponding increases in self-employment; often at very low rates of remuneration. This means that around half of the work force in India currently does not work for a direct employer, not only in agriculture, but in a wide range of non-agricultural activities.

It is argued in this paper that these unfortunate features are not because of the “failure” of the economic growth process: rather, they are fundamental to the accumulation process itself, which actually *requires* the continuing impoverishment of certain sections for its very success. This is because it is the ability to rely on the surpluses generated by different categories of

workers as well as the new potential surpluses thrown up by land acquisition and various activities of the state, that has enabled Indian capitalists to invest more (both domestically and abroad) and expand production of goods and services at an increasing rate. The process of capitalist accumulation in India has utilised the agency of the state to further the project of primitive accumulation through diverse means (including land use change as well as substantial fiscal transfers) and has also exploited specific socio-cultural features, such as caste community and gender differences, to enable greater labour exploitation and therefore higher surplus generation. This argument can be illustrated with the examples of different kinds of workers: those engaged in petty production as self-employed workers; workers operating in segmented labour markets by virtue of social discrimination and exclusion; and women workers engaged in paid and unpaid labour.

Petty production

A fundamental though apparently contradictory feature of the recent Indian accumulation process in India is that it has simultaneously destroyed old forms of petty production and created new ones, which are reflective of the inadequate generation of paid jobs.

The most direct evidence of this is in agriculture. The prolonged agrarian crisis is largely a policy-determined crisis reflecting the falling viability of peasant cultivation. Lack of public investment in agriculture and in agricultural research has been associated with low to poor yield increases, especially in tropical agriculture, and falling productivity of land. Greater trade openness and market orientation of farmers have led to shifts in acreage from traditional food crops that were typically better suited to the ecological conditions and the knowledge and resources of farmers, to cash crops that have increasingly relied on purchased inputs. Public provision of different inputs for cultivation and government regulation of private input provision have been progressively reduced, leaving farmers to the mercy of large seed and fertiliser companies, input dealers. Attempts in most developing countries to reduce subsidies to farmers in the form of lower power and water prices have added to cultivation costs. Financial liberalisation has moved away from policies of directed credit and provided other more profitable (if less productive) opportunities for financial investment, so farmers are forced to opt for much more expensive informal credit networks that have added to their costs. Meanwhile, the ecological implications of pollution, degradation and over-exhaustion of nature as well as climate change have led to loss or declining quality of cultivable land and crop failures.

However, while this particular type of expansion of capitalism displaces and destroys the economic viability of the peasantry, it does not create an

equivalent working class that finds paid employment. This is because large capital does not generate enough employment, as technological progress enables rises in labour productivity and facilitates the expansion of "relative surplus value" in the modern sectors. So the reserve army here is more than a disciplining device, it expands inevitably because of the nature of capitalist accumulation in the current phase. This generates the changing nature of the working class: growth of self-employment ("informal" employment) because of (underlying) growth of the reserve army, as well as due to particular relationships being developed by capital that pass on risks of production to workers, such as outsourcing.

Nevertheless, the current strength of capital therefore derives at least partly from the persistence and even expansion of petty production in some form or the other. Such a category of workers, which is typically engaged in precarious and low-productivity employment, acts as an extended reserve army of labour. It was earlier posited that this category of work also typically had high underemployment, but it is now recognised that this is not underemployment in the traditional sense. Rather, such workers typically have to work long hours in poor conditions for very poor remuneration, as indicated by the 2004-05 National Sample Survey on employment (NSSO 2006). Most significantly from the point of view of the Indian corporate sector, different degrees of outsourcing have blurred the lines between formal and informal activities, and the proliferation of such low-paying self-employment has become an important means of reducing costs for the corporate sector as well passing on the risks of production to smaller units that are essentially part of the working class.

The extent to which all successful formal economic activities in India rely on the implicit subsidies provided by cheap informal labour is largely unrecognised. Yet corporate profitability in India hinges substantially on the lowering of a wide range of fixed costs through outsourcing. Thus, for example, the success of the much-lauded software industry in India is only partly because of cheaper skilled IT professionals compared to their international counterparts. A significant part of the lower costs comes from the entire range of support services: cleaning and maintenance of offices, transport, security, back office work, catering, and so on. These are usually outsourced to smaller companies that hire temporary workers with much lower wages, no job security, very long hours of work and hardly any form of worker protection or other benefits. Without the cost advantages indirectly conferred by these low paid workers, the domestic software industry would find it much harder to compete internationally. The same is true of a wide range of corporate activities across both manufacturing and the newer services.

Socially segmented labour markets

These processes of direct and indirect underwriting of the costs of the corporate sector have been greatly assisted by the ability of employers in India to utilise social characteristics to ensure lower wages to certain categories of workers. Caste and other forms of social discrimination have a long tradition in India, and they have interacted with capitalist accumulation to generate peculiar forms of labour market segmentation that are probably unique to Indian society. Numerous studies (such as Amit Thorat 2010) have found that social categories are strongly correlated with the incidence of poverty and that both occupation and wages differ dramatically across social categories. The National Sample Surveys reveal that the probability of being in a low wage occupation is significantly higher for STs, SCs, Muslims and OBCs (in that order) compared to the general "caste Hindu" population. This is only partly because of differences in education and level of skill, which are also important and which in turn reflect the differential provision of education across social categories.

Such caste-based discrimination has operated in both urban and rural labour markets. An earlier study (Banerjee and Knight 1985) based on a survey of workers in Delhi, showed how there was significant discrimination against Dalit workers operating dominantly through the mechanism of assignment to jobs, with Dalits largely entering poorly-paid "dead-end" jobs. These were essential jobs in both production and services, such as shop and sales assistants, sweepers, loaders, unskilled construction workers, and other unskilled labourers not classified elsewhere, but their wages were significantly lower than those of other workers in even slightly more skilled activities such as drivers and security guards. The study also found that methods of recruitment based on contacts, prevalent in the manual occupations, caused past discrimination to carry over to the present and thereby condemned lower caste groups to providing poorly remunerated labour that is nonetheless essential to income generation in the economy as a whole.

Similarly, empirical studies of caste behaviour in rural India (SK Thorat et al 2009) have found that there are many ways in which caste practices operate to reduce the access of the lower castes to local resources as well as to income earning opportunities, thereby forcing them to provide their labour at the cheapest possible rates to employers. A study (Ghanshyam Shah et al 2006) of various caste-based practices in rural areas of 11 states (Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh including Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) found, in addition to the well-known lack of assets, a large number of social practices that effectively restricted the economic activity of lower caste and Dalit groups, and forced them to supply very low wage labour in harsh and

usually precarious conditions. In 73 percent of survey villages, Dalits could not enter non-Dalit homes. In 70 percent of villages, Dalits could not eat with non-Dalits. In 64 percent of villages, Dalits could not enter common temples. In 36 percent of survey villages, Dalits could not enter village shops. In around one-third of the survey villages, Dalits were not accepted as traders dealing with commonly used items of consumption or production. These practices in turn can be used to keep wages of Dalit workers (who are extremely constrained in their choice of occupation) low, even in period of otherwise rising wages. The persistence of such practices and their economic impact even during the period of the Indian economy's much-vaunted dynamic growth has been noted (Human Rights Watch 2007).

The point to note here is not simply that such practices continue to exist, but that they have become the base on which the economic accumulation process rests. In other words, capitalism in India, especially in its most recent globally integrated variant, has used past and current modes of social discrimination and exclusion to its own benefit, to facilitate the extraction of surplus and ensure greater flexibility and bargaining to employers when dealing with workers. So social categories are not "independent" of the accumulation process – rather, they allow for more surplus extraction, because they reinforce low employment generating (and therefore persistently low wage) tendencies of growth.

Women workers

With respect to women's work, there have been four apparently contradictory trends: simultaneous increases in the incidence of paid labour, underpaid labour, unpaid labour, and the open unemployment of women. (These issues are elaborated upon in Ghosh 2009.) This is a paradox, since it is generally expected that when employment increases, then unemployment comes down; or when paid labour increases, then unpaid labour decreases. A significant part of the explanation for the paradoxical combination lies in the macroeconomic processes within India, described earlier. For urban women, the increase in regular work has dominantly been in services, including most importantly the relatively low-paid and less desirable activity of domestic service, along with some manufacturing. In manufacturing, there has been some recent growth of petty home-based activities of women, typically with very low remuneration, performing outsourced as part of a larger production chain. But explicitly export-oriented employment, even in special zones set up for the purpose, still accounts for only a tiny fraction of women's paid work in urban India. Meanwhile, in rural India self-employment has come to dominate women's activities even in non-agricultural occupations, largely because of the evident difficulty of finding paid work.

A significant and disturbing trend is the evidence on wages: average real wages of women workers increased relatively little over the ten year period 1993-94 to 2004-05 despite rapid increases in national income over this period, and for some categories of women workers (rural graduates and urban illiterate females) real wages actually declined. What is more, there were fairly sharp increases in gender gaps in wages across all categories of workers. Some of the gender gaps in wages for certain categories of workers, such as production and transport workers, are now among the highest in the world.

Unfortunately, recent public employment has not bucked the overall trend of low average real wages and casual or non-permanent contracts for women workers. While a privileged minority of women in government employment continue to access the benefits of the government behaving as a "model employer", new employment for the purpose of providing essential public services has been concentrated in low-remuneration activities with uncertain contracts and hardly any benefits. This is true of school education (with the employment of para-teachers) as well as health and nutrition (with reliance on anganwadi workers and ASHAs). Indeed, the provision of basic public services in India has increasingly relied upon the underpaid labour of women workers. The recent introduction of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a different kind of public employment, which should offer a maximum of 100 days work to rural households at minimum wages. Thus far it has not managed to achieve this, and there are numerous other difficulties that make it difficult for women workers. Even so, it is already evident that women have been actively participating in this scheme, much beyond expectation. Because of its emphasis on heavy earth work at daily wages, it typically involves self-selecting by the poor in rural India, and is likely to have the impact of significantly reducing distress migration and improving the bargaining position of workers, especially women workers. However, it is important to ensure that the scheme is made more flexible in the type of work that can be undertaken, as well as more transparent and accountable as the NREG Act has envisaged.

Conditions of self-employment among women show many of the disturbing tendencies of wage employment. Women's self-employment in non-agriculture is largely characterised by both low expectations regarding incomes and remuneration and substantial non-fulfilment of even these low expectations. Despite some increase in high-remuneration self-employment among professionals and micro-entrepreneurs, in general the expansion of self-employment seems to be a distress-driven process, determined by the lack of availability of sufficient paid work on acceptable terms. Case studies and evidence from large surveys of the NSS both suggest that payment for

home-based work, which is typically on piece rates and accounts for increasing proportions of the economic activity of women, have been declining not only in real but even in nominal terms in many urban centres, despite the economic dynamism of the areas in general.

A consideration of the extent of unpaid work by women indicates that a very substantial amount of women's time is devoted to unpaid labour, often at the cost of leisure and rest. Such unpaid labour is likely to have been increasing over time, especially in the past decade. Public policies have played a role in causing unpaid labour time of women to rise, either because of reduced social expenditure that places a larger burden of care on women, or privatised or degraded common property resources or inadequate infrastructure facilities that increase time spent on provisioning essential goods for the household; or simply because even well-meaning policies (such as for afforestation) are often gender-blind.

Once again, the relevant point here is not simply that such gender differences exist, but that they – and therefore the particular forms that patriarchy takes in India – are closely intertwined with processes of capitalist accumulation.

Implications for the Left movement

The Indian socio-economic reality is very complex, across regions, linguistic groups, rural and urban areas and so on. So it is not always possible to speak of unique or uni-dimensional trajectories. Even so, some macro processes can be identified. In this paper it has been argued that the current process of rapid capitalist accumulation draws upon nature, social patterns that facilitate underpaid and unpaid labour and the growing significance of petty production.

These tendencies create both challenges and opportunities for the Left movement. On the one hand, the proliferation of self employment gives rise to critical issues about how such workers are to be mobilised, how their basic rights are to be ensured, what will constitute worker protection and so on. Similarly, the emergence of segmented labour markets can create perceptions of difference within the working classes, and generate reliance on other forms of identity that militate against wider struggles for economic justice and democratic rights. On the other hand, greater recognition and understanding of the complex social realities that have been so crucial in underpinning the recent expansion of the economy can allow for much more creative responses in terms of varying demands and forms of mobilisation.

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Globalization and Social Progress

Prabhat Patnaik

There is a powerful view that capitalist development in India, whose pace has accelerated during the period of globalization, will not only bring material advancement to the working people, but also speed up the process of social transformation in the country by destroying its caste-based feudal structure, and, in its place, ushering in a modern bourgeois society. This is what capitalism is credited with having accomplished in the metropolis; and the belief is that under the current dispensation this is what it will also accomplish in countries like India. The rapid rate of growth of GDP, the spread of bourgeois life-styles, the destruction of traditional activities which had been carried out for centuries under the aegis of petty production, the rapidity of technological and structural change in the economy involving in particular the growth of "knowledge-intensive" industries, and the pace of urbanization, are all cited as pointers to this revolutionary role that capitalism is supposedly playing in India at this moment.

Some proponents of this argument will concede that since capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of wage labour, its progressive role is necessarily circumscribed by this fact; but since the proletariat itself is supposed to get a subsistence wage that is typically higher than the average income of the petty producers that capitalism displaces, wage exploitation still does not negate the possibility of a material improvement in the living conditions of the working people, who shift from being petty producers (or landless agricultural labourers) to being wage-workers in the modern sector. And, the socially progressive role of capitalism in destroying the institutionalized inequalities of the feudal system occurs despite its being an exploitative order in its own fashion.

Looked at from this perspective, the current travails of the people caught up in the vortex of this transformation appear to be merely transitory, a passing phase that will usher in a modern bourgeois society in India. When Professor Amartya Sen talks about the fact that London and Manchester could not have been built without displacing people who originally lived there¹, he is underscoring the transient nature of the travails of those displaced, and hence suggesting that this necessary price must be paid for the achievement

of a "modern society" à la Marx². The question is: is capitalism in its current incarnation playing this role, or even capable of doing so?

I

Much has been written *apropos* of the economy to show that the actual capitalist transformation that is taking place does not correspond to this picture. I shall therefore be brief in my discussion of the economy³. While petty production is being ruined wherever it exists, whether in agriculture or fisheries, or craft production, the absorption of labour by the growing capitalist sector whose encroachment causes this ruin is minuscule. As a result the petty producers, who are threatened, either linger on in their respective spheres, cutting further and further into their subsistence and hence getting deeper into distress, or desert their respective spheres to migrate to cities, where, instead of being absorbed into the ranks of the proletariat, they simply swell the ranks of the already vast reserve army of labour. In either case they witness absolute impoverishment.

Marx's description of capitalism as producing wealth at one pole and poverty at another could not have been as true in any other context as it is under contemporary neo-liberal capitalism in India. In the earlier phase of *dirigiste* capitalist development in India, the State, in fulfilment of the promise of the anti-colonial struggle, protected to an extent the petty production sector against the encroachment of capitalist production, through a variety of measures ranging from cheap credit, to subsidies, extension services, help in marketing, tariff protection and quantitative import restrictions, and even a policy of "reservations" (where certain products were "reserved" for the petty production sector). But with the coming of the regime of "globalization", under the hegemony of international finance capital, with which the Indian big bourgeoisie has got progressively integrated, all this has changed. The transformation in the nature of the State, from being an entity apparently standing above all classes as a benign arbiter, to promoting exclusively the interests of finance capital, on the plea that what is good for finance is good for society as a whole, has resulted in a withdrawal of its support to petty production: the ruthless and inexorable logic of "spontaneous" capitalism, namely the decimation of petty production to make room for capitalism, has once more started asserting itself with a vengeance.

The absolute impoverishment of vast masses of the working population arising from the decimation of petty production, is not an India-specific phenomenon; nor can it be necessarily seen as characterizing "late capitalism" alone. It is possible to argue that it constitutes a feature of capitalism *per se*. The fact that the displaced petty producers did not linger on

forever as a growing pauperized mass in the classical story of the development of metropolitan capitalism, was because of the widespread imperialist aggrandisement that accompanied this development. There was a massive migration of European workers (as many as fifty million in the second half of the nineteenth century) to the temperate regions of white settlement like Australia, Canada, and the United States, where they drove off the local inhabitants from their land, and set up as "farmers". Likewise colonialism or semi-colonialism inflicted "de-industrialization" in older countries like India and China, and entailed a geographical shift in the location of the dispossession of petty producers; hence it made possible much larger net labour absorption *within* metropolitan industrial capitalism than would have occurred otherwise.

In short, any tendency that there might be under capitalism to swell continuously the relative size of the reserve army of labour was kept in check by the operation of imperialism. The petty producers displaced by the building of London or Manchester could migrate to the "New World" to cultivate lands from which the Amerindians were driven out. But that possibility does not exist for the displaced petty producers of today, which is why Professor Sen's analogy is so inapposite.

I am not necessarily asserting there exists such an immanent tendency of capitalism to swell continuously the relative size of the reserve army, i.e. that the system is intrinsically incapable of absorbing the displaced petty producers into the active army of labour at a sufficiently rapid rate. But I am suggesting that to lose sight of the historical role of imperialism in making possible the absorption of the bulk of the domestically-displaced petty producers into the capitalist sector as wage-workers, and to argue instead that such absorption itself constitutes capitalism's immanent tendency is erroneous.

Putting it differently what we are witnessing in India today is a process of primitive accumulation of capital, where the victims of such accumulation are not getting absorbed into the ranks of the proletariat. And this fact underlies the growing absolute immiserization that is evident in contemporary India.

I shall cite just one piece of evidence to support this claim of absolute immiserization. The Government of India has traditionally defined poverty in terms of access to 2400 calories per person per day in rural India and 2100 calories per person per day in urban India. If we take these very norms then the proportion of rural population falling below 2400 calories in 2004-5 was 87 percent, up from 74.5 percent in 1993-4; and the proportion of urban population falling below 2100 calories was 64 percent in 2004-5, up from 56 percent in 1993-4. This increase in food deprivation is also evident from

macro-level figures, which show that per capita foodgrain absorption for the Indian population as a whole which had been increasing from around 150 kilogrammes at the time of independence to around 180 kilogrammes at the end of the 1980s, first stagnated and later declined during the years of neo-liberalism, to around 156 kilogrammes in 2008, which is a figure lower than for any year after 1953.

Faced with such evidence of absolute impoverishment, government spokesmen attempt to counter it by talking of a change in people's tastes, which apparently explains this decline in food absorption. They suggest in other words that this decline in food absorption is voluntary and self-imposed, and does not reflect any absolute impoverishment. But, if we take figures of *direct and indirect* absorption of foodgrains by people (the indirect absorption being via feedgrains for animal products and processed foods) across all countries of the world, both for any given year and also over time, then *we invariably find a positive relationship between per capita income and per capita foodgrain absorption in this comprehensive sense*. A decline in per capita total (i.e. direct and indirect) foodgrain absorption in an economy with high income growth, therefore, is necessarily indicative of absolute immiserization of large segments of the population.

Capitalist development in the period of neo-liberalism in short, far from improving the material conditions of the working people, is on the contrary making large sections of them absolutely worse off. The fact that this occurs in a period of extraordinarily high rates of growth of GDP suggests a sharp economic polarization within Indian society. At the root of this polarization, to recapitulate, lies the fact that while, accompanying the high GDP growth, there is a ruthless process of primitive accumulation of capital going on (I have elsewhere called it "accumulation through encroachment"), the distressed petty producers are not getting absorbed into the ranks of the proletariat despite such growth. Because of this there is all-round impoverishment, among petty producers, which spreads to agricultural labourers and workers both in the organized and unorganized sectors.

II

This very fact of non-absorption of the victims of primitive accumulation into the ranks of the proletariat, however, *affects the form of the primitive accumulation of capital*. Primitive accumulation can take a variety of forms, from outright eviction of petty producers who simply get detached from their means of production, to their continuing in their old activities at lower and lower levels of living. In a situation where distressed petty producers have little scope for breaking into the ranks of the proletariat, they tend to linger on in their old activities at reduced levels of living. And even

the bourgeois State, chary of simply allowing the dispossession of large masses of petty producers who have nowhere else to go, stops short of promoting such dispossession. This is not to say that dispossession does not occur; *but such dispossession does not constitute the sole form of primitive accumulation*. A segment of petty producers lingers on in traditional occupations experiencing increasing distress. And this has a bearing on the social consequences of capitalist development in the era of globalization.

The so-called "modernity" of capitalism arises from the fact that it tends to destroy pre-existing communities and create out of them "free individuals". Of course, the "freedom of the individual" that capitalism celebrates is in an essential sense vacuous: not only is it the case that underlying this "freedom" is an exploitative order, but, what is more, the "spontaneity" of the system makes individuals *without discrimination*, whether workers who are the victims of exploitation or capitalists who are the beneficiaries of it, into mere cogs in the wheel, devoid of subjectivity and without any possibility of asserting their will. They play out their roles that the system objectively, spontaneously and imperceptibly thrusts upon them, like in Marx's famous description of the capitalist as "capital personified". Nonetheless relative to the *explicit* coercion that an individual faces in a feudal society, the very imperceptibility of the coercion of capitalism represents a big step forward.

In the process of resistance to this "spontaneous" order, however, a new community is created, that is completely different from the communities that existed prior to the triumph of capitalism. This is a community of individuals who "combine" voluntarily, to start with, because of being identically placed in the system of production. This "combination" helps them to struggle, to develop trade union consciousness, which, with the acquisition of theory that comes to them from the "outside", develops into class consciousness that seeks to transcend the capitalist order.

The differences between the community that capitalism destroys and the community that would destroy capitalism, i.e. between the pre-existing "peasant community" or "village community" of the feudal order and the class alliance that comes into being for the transcendence of capitalism, are fundamental and obvious. But one particular aspect of this difference concerns us here. And this consists of the fact that the pre-capitalist community is itself riven by hierarchies, inequalities and oppression. The Indian village community for instance, such as it was, was characterized by practices like "untouchability" and "unseeability", compared to which the emergence of the bourgeois individual represents a giant step forward, even though this individual may be circumscribed in his or her subjectivity by the spontaneity of the system. This earlier "community" in short is a

"community" that encompasses oppression, even of the worst kind; *it is a "community" formed by the fact that people happen to be born into it.* Hence its destruction is a condition for "modernity" and a giant step in the march to freedom.

This destruction in turn is founded upon the destruction of the *material basis* of the old community. The question is: what contributes to this destruction of the material basis of the old order?

III

Much has been written about the "corrosive influence" of money, and more generally of commodity production, upon the old order. In the famous *Science and Society* debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Paul Sweezy, following the lead of Henri Pirenne, had seen the spread of commodity production as the primary factor undermining the feudal mode of production, against which Maurice Dobb had cited the instance of eastern Europe to make the point that in certain conditions, commodity production, far from being a destructive force for the feudal order, could even lead to a "second serfdom" (see Hilton 1976).

When we discuss specifically the Indian case, where we have a caste-based feudal system, the corrosive effect of commodity production operates in far more complex ways. While it certainly changes the composition of the landlord class, increases the degree of concentration of operated area, and swells the proportion of landless labourers, all of which it did in the colonial times when there was an enormous spread of commodity production, its effect in undermining the system of production as a whole is far more slow and uncertain. Of course since commodity production spread in India during the colonial times in particular, it is difficult to determine how much of the durability of the pre-existing order in the face of this spread was because of the intrinsic weakness of commodity production as a dissolving influence, and how much because of the overall constraints imposed by the colonial environment. But the fact of this intrinsic weakness of commodity production as a dissolving influence cannot be denied. And if we are talking not just about changes in the realm of the economy alone but about the destruction of the pre-capitalist "community" with its caste and religious differentiations and hierarchies, then the corrosive effect of commodity production on this hierarchical social order is even more slow and uncertain.

Communist literature in India has tended to highlight "landlordism" as the key to the perpetuation of the hierarchical social order that characterizes the pre-bourgeois "community", and hence the smashing of "landlordism" through land reforms that break up land concentration, as the crucial element in the breaking up of this order. While this analysis is

unexceptionable in a certain sense, it is important to be clear about why this is so. True, large landowners within the old "community" are typically the custodians of the hierarchy that marks the old order; but the mere removal of the class of landlords existing at any time (by which I mean persons who do not physically participate in the process of production) does not eliminate or even undermine this hierarchy. It may mean a change in the identity of the dominant caste; it may mean a shift in the identity of the custodians of caste hierarchy, with the older stratum of landlords being substituted in this custodian role by a new stratum of capitalist farmers risen from the ranks of the rich peasants; but it does not mean the end or even a weakening of the caste-based social order.

So, the mere smashing of landlordism *per se*, though of great significance in determining the nature and trajectory of economic development, and hence indirectly of the trajectory of social development, does not directly or immediately lead to a denting of the caste-based social order. But what does lead to a denting of the social order is the *process* of smashing of landlordism.

The fact that the bourgeoisie in countries like ours, arriving late on the historical scene, needs to have an alliance with the landlord class for the exercise of its political hegemony, and hence, while carrying out a certain measure of land reforms, necessary for clearing the way for capitalist development in agriculture, does not smash landlordism itself, implies that breaking up land concentration and abolishing landlessness is a task that falls to the working class. The smashing of landlordism therefore becomes part of an agenda of the proletariat, and hence the first stage of a prolonged revolutionary transition towards socialism. And it is this which leads to a denting of the caste-based social order. In other words, it is not the sheer fact of the breaking up of landlordism that undermines the basis of the caste-based social order, but the identity of the class (and its political representatives) that undertakes this task. Hence it is the specific historical process through which landlordism is broken, and indeed can alone be broken, in societies like ours, rather than the sheer fact of its break up, which dents the caste-based and hierarchical social order.

It follows that the destruction of the pre-bourgeois community in the classical case of transition to capitalism occurred not simply because the emerging bourgeoisie smashed feudal landlordism (in many cases it did not even do so), but because it smashed the entire production structure of the pre-bourgeois order through a ruthless process of primitive accumulation of capital that got superimposed upon the corrosive influence of commodity production, and that dispossessed the producers, to "set them free" for recruitment into the proletariat. And it also follows that in societies in which bourgeois hegemony prevails on the basis of an alliance with the (post-land

reform) landlord class, *even a ruthless process of primitive accumulation of capital that leads not to a dispossession of the producers but to their absolute impoverishment in their existing occupations, will not dent the pre-bourgeois social order.* It is this which is the fate of societies like ours in the era of globalization.

Their integration into a global capitalist order dominated by international finance capital, unleashes a massive process of primitive accumulation of capital, but the incapacity of the rapidly growing capitalist segment to create larger employment and hence absorb the impoverished petty producers, entails that this process of primitive accumulation takes the form of intensified distress for such producers within their existing occupations, rather than their outright dispossession. This means that the old hierarchical social order continues, even as there is rapid capitalist development. The relative size of the economic activities upon which it is based may shrink compared to the "modern" capitalist sectors. But its internal structure remains substantially intact and its socially retrograde character puts its stamp upon the entire society, even as malls and casinos come up aplenty and rampant consumerism afflicts the new-rich.

Or putting it differently, the growing economic hiatus that tears the country apart, and absolute impoverishment of petty producers, and hence of agricultural labourers and urban workers, provide the overall context within which bourgeois material life-styles of the most garish kind get superimposed upon a traditional, hierarchical, caste-based and religiosity-driven social order.

IV

There are two co-acting but distinct reasons why rapid capitalist development does not undermine retrograde social structures in countries like ours: one is the form of the primitive accumulation of capital, namely the absolute impoverishment of petty producers in their existing occupations rather than their pervasive outright dispossession (owing to capitalism's incapacity to absorb labour); the other is the *political compromise* entered into by the bourgeoisie with the old order. Let us discuss the latter.

We talked earlier of two different "communities", one which capitalism supposedly destroys and the other that can destroy capitalism. The latter is class-based and derives its strength from an active working class movement. The tendency under capitalism in societies like ours is to thwart the formation of the latter kind of community which poses a threat to its own existence, by keeping alive the former kind of community. Hence the old social order is kept alive by capitalism as a means of preventing any threats to itself from the emergence of the new community.

This was not a possibility open to capitalism in its classical period, since the destruction of the old community preceded in time the emergence of the new community. Primitive accumulation of capital had undermined the old order, decimated the old community, by pushing numerous dispossessed petty producers into towns in search of jobs, into workhouses under the Poor Laws, and eventually into the ranks of industrial workers, and of course into emigration, before the workers' combinations came up as a prelude to trade unionism and the unleashing of class struggles. But in countries like ours, where the very lateness of capitalist development telescopes these two temporally-separated phases of capitalist history, the possibility is open for capitalism to make peace with the old order to prevent its own transcendence by the "community" coming into being under the new order.

This tendency whose recognition lies at the very core of Leninism, paradoxically gets strengthened in the era of globalization. International finance capital, the driving force behind globalization, launches an offensive on the working class everywhere. It appropriates the State entirely for serving its own exclusive interests, for which the State must withdraw from its role as a producer, investor, welfare provider and a supposed arbiter between classes. The Welfare State is wound up even as the budget is used for doling out large sums to financial interests. Labour market flexibility is sought to be introduced by attenuating trade union rights. State assets are sold to private capitalists "for a song". And fiscal policy is used for effecting a massive redistribution of incomes from the bulk of society to the big capitalists and financial interests. This happens in India as elsewhere.

Since the State, participating in this onslaught against the workers, and, as we have seen earlier, the petty producers, cannot be simultaneously engaged in a process of social reform, the tendency inevitably is to compromise with the existing social order. Instead therefore of using the State as a means of struggle, in an uncompromising fashion, against pre-modern practices and institutions, the bourgeoisie uses the State to struggle in an uncompromising fashion against the working class and all other groups raising class demands, and tends to make peace with pre-modern practices and institutions.

Besides, since the State in question is a nation-State while finance capital is internationally mobile, any disruption of "peace" within the nation tends to drive finance away (except where such disruption of "peace" has been deliberately strategically engineered, like in Iraq). To keep the nation hospitable and attractive for finance capital, the State must attack class formations of the oppressed. *Precisely for that very reason however it must be conciliatory towards non-class social groups.* And it does so, through intricate social negotiations among groups that constitute the old "community". The

fact that the old "community" does not get destroyed, does not mean that the social groups constituting it sit idle in the new circumstances. They raise their sectional demands and the State negotiates between them.

This of course is the basis of what has been called "identity politics". The decline of class politics and the rise instead of "identity politics" which has been a notable feature of the Indian scene in the neo-liberal era is thus a direct off-shoot of India's integration into an order dominated by international finance capital⁵.

It is no accident that while France is witnessing an upsurge of class militancy, India is caught in the grip of identity politics. This *inter alia* is because of what was mentioned earlier, namely that even the most modern incarnation of capitalism in India still constitutes a superimposition on the old order while in the metropolis the denting of the old order in the very process of emergence of capitalism implies that the only break in quietude comes through a revival of class politics. True, Etienne Balibar (1993) talks of metropolitan capitalism using religion to thwart working class militancy; but the contribution of religion there is towards *quietude* rather than towards *identity politics*.

V

With globalization then, the about turn of the bourgeoisie is carried much further. The anti-colonial struggle in which the bourgeoisie had retained a leadership role had been closely enmeshed with a struggle for social reform. Not only was "land to the tiller" the slogan of the anti-colonial struggle itself, which meant necessarily an attack on landlordism, but the abolition of caste oppression, of communal discrimination and of gender oppression were explicitly enshrined in its agenda. With decolonization however the bourgeoisie makes the first round of its compromises: it abandons "land to the tiller", and forms an alliance with the pre-existing landlord class even while carrying out such limited land reforms as would give a fillip to the development of capitalism in agriculture. Nonetheless, it protects and to an extent promotes petty production, remains more or less committed to the agenda of social reforms, and builds up the public sector as a bulwark against metropolitan capital, even while collaborating with the latter to a growing extent, facilitated by the intrusion of the Bretton Woods institutions into the development process.

The compromise however is carried much further in the era of globalization. Collaboration with metropolitan capital gives way to integration with international finance capital, as Indian capital itself seeks to go global. Protection of petty production is progressively withdrawn and a virulent process of primitive accumulation is unleashed, even though the

form it takes is influenced by the incapacity of capitalist growth to absorb much labour. The concept of the “nation” as it had come into being through the anti-colonial struggle is swamped by a deep hiatus that develops between the bourgeoisie and the restricted circle of beneficiaries of globalization on the one hand, and the bulk of the working people on the other. The latter experience absolute impoverishment as a consequence of primitive accumulation co-existing with non-absorption of labour in the growing capitalist sector. And the agenda of social reform gets increasingly relegated to the background as the State increasingly begins to do social negotiations between groups belonging to the old order, which necessarily have to take cognizance of their relative strengths. If the Nehruvian bourgeois State could pass the Hindu Marriage Act against stiff opposition, the neo-liberal bourgeois State lacks the will even to come down heavily on *khap panchayats*.

VI

An additional factor enters into the picture here. Social intervention by the State is also linked to its economic intervention, the classic example being job reservations for the socially oppressed sections. As the State withdraws from the sphere of production, as more and more of State services are “outsourced” to private suppliers, as State projects are increasingly developed in the “public-private-partnership” mode, the scope for using this route for bringing about a modicum of equality across social groups gets restricted.

A similar development occurs in the sphere of education. Reservations for deprived social groups in educational institutions become difficult to enforce as education becomes increasingly privatized. The practice that has developed in India is that “self-financing educational institutions”, which basically means private profit-making institutions, provide no reservations for non-SC/ST social groups. The process of privatization of education therefore simply excludes them completely. As for SC/ST groups, while private institutions may respect reservation rules, they demand that the government should pay for the students in this reserved category at the exorbitant rates fixed by them, which, apart from implying substantial government subsidization of private profit-making, leads in the context of fiscal conservatism and “sound finance” to cuts in government expenditures earmarked for such groups in other ways.

In other words, since the market functions on the basis of existing inequalities, and instead of obliterating such inequalities tends to reproduce and accentuate them over time, the “withdrawal” of the State in favour of the market, as dictated by international finance capital in the era of globalization, tends *ipso facto* to reproduce and accentuate the inequalities among social groups within the pre-existing social order. A complete about turn thus

occurs even with regard to affirmative action. And even the hope that a modicum of affirmative action can still be salvaged through selective State intervention within a neo-liberal economy is belied by the triumph of the principle of "sound finance".

To say all this is not necessarily to assert that there is uniform retrogression in the social sphere with regard to all possible indicators of progress. What occurs in this sphere is the outcome of a whole range of complex processes, including of social movements of various kinds. But the real point is that the presumption that with globalization there is social progress because the "modernity" introduced by globalization seeps through the pores of society into every sphere of life is a facile one.

Not only does this not happen on its own, but even the scope for State intervention to help capitalism in the era of globalization to play its supposedly "progressive" and "modernizing role" is limited. This is because the State itself is not a free agent to overcome at its will the spontaneity of the system. On the contrary it is the "spontaneity" of the capitalist system, which also determines which kind of State intervention is possible and which is not. Indeed it is this fact which also makes the view that the State can intervene in an incremental fashion to proceed towards a more "just society" within a capitalist economy, untenable.

Social progress, in the sense of overcoming a caste-based, religiosity-driven social order, marked by gender oppression, requires, *as a necessary condition*, going beyond the spontaneity of the capitalist system. It requires intervention by the praxis of the newly-formed "community" under capitalism, viz. the proletariat. Two conclusions follow from this: the praxis of the proletariat (and its political representatives) must encompass a smashing of the old order, not just with respect to landlordism but more comprehensively; equally, anyone genuinely interested in overcoming the old order must make common cause with the movement of the working class.

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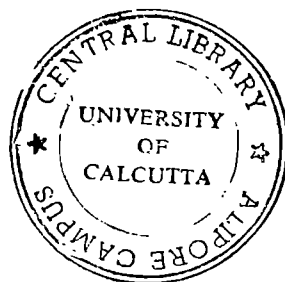
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Notes

- 1 Sen (2007)
- 2 Marx in his Preface to the first German edition of *Capital* Volume I (1974, 20) had talked of the book dealing with the "economic law of motion of modern society", thus using the term "modern society" almost synonymously with a full-fledged capitalist society.
- 3 The argument of this section borrows heavily from the work of U. Patnaik. For a recent reference see U. Patnaik (2010a and 2010b).
- 4 See Patnaik (2005)
- 5 Of course the term "identity politics" covers a range of diverse cases, and is therefore a hold-all term that can be seriously misleading. We shall not go into this issue here, but it can be argued that the material basis for all the different manifestations of identity politics is provided in one way or another by India's integration into an order dominated by international finance capital.



NOTE/Judgment and Misjudgment

What to make of the Ayodhya judgment*, some slight distance from the day of reckoning? As good a way as any to begin trying to make some sense of a dodgy business might be to do a quick once over of the verdict itself, as also of the main directions taken by various reactions. Operationally, the verdict has partitioned the disputed area three ways, one part awarded to Hindu groups that were litigants in the case in behalf of the revered deity's idol, one part to the Sunni Waqf Board, a third portion to the Nirmohi Akhara. One of the judges, Dharam Veer Sharma, by the drift of his rulings and findings, seems in effect to have clean dismissed any merit to the Muslim side's pleas and claims and has awarded entire title to the Hindu groups; a second, Justice Sudhir Aggarwal, has preferred to stand somewhere midway, unwilling apparently to outrightly deny the Muslim case or send home the minority community altogether empty handed, and unprepared at the same time to withhold judicial ratification of the *Ramjanmaboomi* movement's quite contrary claims. Both Justice Sharma and Justice Aggarwal have effectively accepted suppositions of the existence of an ancient temple prior to the construction of the Babri mosque, the former ostensibly weighing in with the presumption that it was pulled down to build a mosque on the holy site since the mosque according to him, having been built contrary to Islamic tenets, could not even be considered a mosque. The third judge, Justice S.U. Khan, has noted that excavations of ancient debris did appear to indicate possible existence of layers of pristine temple-like archeological remains in the area, but this reading of the matter clearly does not conclusively establish that anything was 'demolished' to build the mosque. In determining pre-Masjid circumstances and deciding the question of whether a temple could have stood on the spot priorly, their lordships have relied primarily on findings of an ASI study that has been quizzed by historians, archaeologists and the community of academic experts on its impartiality due to perceptions of proximity to the erstwhile BJP-led dispensation. Even

*On 30 September 2010, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court delivered a verdict on the Babri Masjid title suit.

the issue of who precisely had the mosque known as the Babri Masjid constructed (or when) remains a point of contention (different judges conclude different things, signalling that such technicalities pertaining to events in the distant past, a past at any rate long predating the constitutional provisions under which contemporary jurisprudence works, are perhaps beyond the competence of judiciary to conclusively and incontrovertibly decide).

However on one key issue convergence of views seems total: all three judges are agreed that the spot right under the central dome today enjoys (and for some considerable time has enjoyed) a special sacred status in point of faith among the Hindu multitudes as Lord Ram's "janmasthan". Most decisively from the standpoint of legal implications, the faith of believers that this is so has been considered a sufficient ground to accept this, for all practical purposes, as both *de facto* and *de jure*, the birthplace of Lord Ram, such that determination of claims to the precincts may be determined thereby in law. An inevitable corollary flowing from this part of the judgment is that even if the a tripartite division takes place, the specific area under the dome obviously could not now form part of a one-third award to the Muslim plaintiffs, which further implies that if a mosque were ever to be built in reparation of wrong committed in razing the erstwhile Babri Masjid, the area corresponding to the location of the central dome could not be permitted to form part of such a new/replacement structure – a determination that in powerfully symbolic ways amounts to a significant 'decentring of the centre'. Nor is removal of the idols (perhaps always a contingent impossibility and a questionably desirable 'solution' in light of possible dire consequences) now even a legally contemplatable possibility under the terms of the Allahabad High Court decision.

Meanwhile commentators from within the minority community (with some notable exceptions) have generally voiced a greater or lesser degree of disquiet. The general feeling among Muslims is that they were sold short and in an unjust way, including in terms of time limitations in a protracted legal process for which the appellant is not responsible. Hindu groups and organisations have responded contrastingly and more or less politically, seeing the verdict as having upheld their stand by resolving the "pseudo-secular" contradiction between law and faith. Having all along emphasised that matters of deep faith were above techno-legal or intellectual scrutiny, they see themselves as vindicated in law. Simultaneously – and here the political platform is to the fore – the old call to build a grand (*bhavya*) Ram temple has been vociferously revived, now suitably tempered to a somewhat mellowier intonation and recast as an accompanying 'elder brother' appeal (or Big Brother, depending on how you see it) which asks Muslims to "come

join" in a grand effort to refurbish national pride and honour by helping build the temple and thus show themselves cooperative, interested in conciliation, and respectful toward deep Hindu sentiment in revering what is a major holy spot for the latter and a symbol of national pride besides. Muslims on the other hand have stressed that harmony is a two way street and it isn't their responsibility alone to heal the breach if their perspective isn't accorded due weight and status.

Secularists, leftists and liberal intellectuals have foregrounded an even more basic issue. Their reservations are on the preponderant reliance on criteria of faith in a matter of law, material claims and title determination; they have quizzed the nature and validity of evidence forwarded as well as the conceptual grounds and premises of adjudication and expressed their fears over possible long term implications of making faith a key article of law. Secularist critics have also raised doubts about the reconciliatory intentions behind the verdict arguing that reconciliation cannot work unless it has a firm basis in justice and truth. In the immediate aftermath of the judgment, several expressed concern that the Court exceeded its brief in a title determination suit by resorting to a three-way division of property, since this formula, which did not really clearly settle conflicting title claims, was calculated to keep the fires burning by leaving all claimants somewhat happy and somewhat unhappy, even if no one is sent away with nothing. Commentators felt that what had taken shape was something more in the nature of a panchayati settlement keeping various "sentiments" and "desires" in mind, than an example of modern jurisprudence and legal procedure based on hard facts, material claims and solid constitutional principles. With all the restiveness from various quarters in the background, the matter it is clear is going to be raised in the apex court by different parties to the legal dispute, so in that sense the dispute stands unresolved in a convincingly satisfactory way.

The question of implications of the title suit verdict for the Babri demolition case has meanwhile been raised. While the BJP is raising the pitch and trying to revive sales of its kind of product by presenting its case as vindicated, Mulayam Singh Yadav and some others have tried familiarly to hook a Muslim sense of grievance and injury, which at least some among the Muslim community (and of course others) haven't quite appreciated for its rather obvious political exploitationism. Congress as usual is pussyfooting uncertainly. After first welcoming the judgment as good sense and a possible basis for peace and concord, it has now become more alive to possible problems in the verdict as framed.

Those are the basic facts. The real tangle though is in the underlying issues, meanings and implications. For a start, for a case with such profound

societal repercussions, “the verdict” does not stem from a ‘full and unanimous agreement even on the basics; in fact it is dramatically split down the line amongst different pairs of judges, on a number of tricky issues of fact and interpretation in ways that are open to decipherment, reading between the lines and misprision – a pluralism of meanings that here is unwelcome and gives rise to all kinds of misgivings. With so many material details in the terms of reference for the case still effectively in the arena of speculation and decodation, the points of non-convergence and the impossibility of achieving unanimity as to the facts themselves thus become a striking feature of what has come to be known as “the Ayodhya verdict”. Given the contentious and conflict-generative nature of the case, this is not good news. Since no clear and full homogeneity of perceptions, findings and rulings exists that makes it possible to speak unequivocally of a unified verdict with firm agreed bases, an open season on perceptions and interpretations has come to be the most characteristic element of the situation, so much so that to even speak of “the verdict” may be something of a misnomer. Anomalies, divisions and discrepancies on hard facts and contentiousness of the judgment flowing therefrom is not a small matter for a judicial decision of enormous sensitivity and far-reaching potential repercussions, whose factual bases one might have hoped were established in foundations that were impregnable, unfractured and settled “beyond reasonable doubt”, leaving no room for serious dubiety, controversy or edgy disquiet.

What’s perhaps most disconcerting is the shadow of a doubt that has been voiced as to the drift of adjudications, in terms of the question of the impartiality and evenhandedness of judicial dealings. In a set of readings and divergent opinions on a range of key issues that some might sense as failing to dispel altogether the strange impression of something like a denominational division of judicial opinion, the verdict has elicited sharp reactions from concerned critics worried about the strict unimpeachability of its secular bonafides. Advocate Anupam Gupta has gone so far as to declare that the judgment is a text from which the “word and concept of secularism is completely missing.” This caveat was voiced in the context of the release in New Delhi of a statement from noted academics and activists that has deplored the “disturbing absence of the concept of secularism” in a judgment that seemed to read as though it were penned in a pre-Constitution era. The most dangerous precedent here, Anupam Gupta warned, was that “Belief won over facts”. In emphasising that “the very manner in which the judgment was approached...showed that perceptions were placed over facts” (*The Times of India*, October 16, 2010), the critical statement thus touched on an unsettling first-order misgiving: namely that in shaping the premises for adjudication, the prejudicial mental filters of persons weighing the

evidence in a major legal dispute may not have been absented and scrupulously set aside through every phase of the judicial process while relying wholly on a rigorous and unbending dependence on fact, law and constitutional principle alone. Granted that simple law of numerical majority decides things in a democracy and for that matter in a judicial bench, the barest hint of a possibility that a denominational accenting of interpretation of evidentiary and decisive matters could start playing a part in predicting outcome of judicial proceedings could prove dismembering for any modern secular democracy. The nation, as a secular entity, could not survive a situation that ceased to ensure that not only are all equal before the Law, but no less importantly are transparently perceived to be so, to a degree that entirely and utterly exorcises the slightest perception of denominational tendentiousness in applicancy of the law's protections and guarantees to different parties, groups and social segments.

Some of the more unsettling impressions left by the verdict pertain thus not even so much to the final directives given, as to the logic and spirit of arguments forwarded, and to what these in the *longue duree* perspective could conjure up or enable. The fear is that it could now be possible to say that if one can get enough people to "believe" something with "full faith" it then assumes the status of a "fact" in law, or at least of a "truth" that becomes a basis for adjudication. It is of course a given that in a sheerly fideistic epistemology, almost anything can become a revered belief, which if enough persons subscribe to it, becomes in some senses a widely and deeply shared sacred notion. Thus if you could get enough people to "believe" this "almost anything" very deeply and in "full faith", then it, within the faith system, does indeed acquire that status of a sacred truth – regardless of what investigations or "excavations" show or don't show up!

Sacramental experience requires no more because in a certain sense its reference is to matters that are beyond strict and invincible material demonstration. The question though is whether this commonplace actuality of fideistic beliefs can be extended legal sanctity – to firm up a jurisprudential logic, whereby matters of faith then gain full tenability as matters of fact in law in respect of what in the end are material questions. This is especially so in a real world where not all fideistic expressions are invariably innocent, bonafide or voiced in a spirit of humility unmindful of worldly claims and ambitions. In this latter context it's sobering to recall what Hitler's propaganda minister Goebbels said about how "truth" in the political sphere at least can be expediently manufactured and achieve wide acceptance by continuous broadcasting and reiteration of patent untruths. In Germany during the Reich, for instance, vast multitudes were got to sincerely "believe" with complete conviction (and with a telescoping of the literal inside the

metaphorical) that a Jew is a species of rat, and we know with what results. Beliefs, positive and negative, can thus find a very wide following, but this still doesn't establish their firm reliability as facts. Thus not just the Inquisition and church authorities but the teeming and God fearing millions were opposed, from a position of devout and honest belief, to the lonely and dangerous heretical insistence of Galileo that Ptolemaic cosmogony based on geocentricity was flawed. Ditto Darwin, on evolutionism versus creationism.

Such instances whose real outcome has now been settled in the court of rational science prove faith is faith and fact is fact, and that the former is no automatic proof of the veracity or reliability of facticist claims preferred in the name of deep or widely accepted belief. Given the lessons of such documented historic instances where the votaries of faith were plainly in the wrong, then if almost anything can become a belief by acceptance on part of large numbers, does it – should it – for that reason be granted absolute tenability as fact in law? The problem becomes that much more piquant if the evidence is, at the very least, conflictual and ambivalent, and open to multiple and variant interpretation on numerous points. What if at least some of the facts don't square up? What if many or most of the 'substantive' constituents of a knowledge construct are dogged by incertitudes, questions and controversy? Is reasonable doubt then dispelled? Some might argue that if we go forward in courts of law from the premise that none of this matters and that faith dispels all doubt, we've started walking on slippery ice, and down a dangerous slope.

From a pragmatic real-life standpoint one must however be fair and admit that the challenge facing the court was a very sticky one, and that they tried to find in good faith a *via media* solution down a line of least resistance – the kind of judgment Brecht's folk judge Azdak in the "Caucasian Chalk Circle" might have put forward, no doubt with some good intentions ("let's avoid a bloodbath, don't arouse the dozing dragon..." etc.). But good intentions still do not add up to "good judgment", or turn the court's solution of a vexed problem into one based on modern jurisprudence, firm fact, undeniable material evidence, sound reasoning, and credible constitutionality. The knotty part of the judicial dilemma of course would be the awareness – and there can be little doubt that this awareness would have weighed considerably with the Lucknow bench judges – that if title *had* been decided categorically in favour of either party and clean denied to the other (regardless of the actual rights and wrongs of the matter) then in a real world there could be big time trouble; indeed mayhem if aggressive majoritarian elements had become the "aggrieved party" following the pronouncement of the verdict. So no matter which way a clear award of title had gone, there could be no clear winners in which peace and secular values, i.e. society at

large, could be easily well served all around. And so an expedient and questionable 'political' and 'community' wisdom of sorts has been attempted, in place of a strictly legal and rational settlement of hard claims and material facts; inevitably a number of matters have been troublingly fudged or 'resolved' in ways that leave endless room for doubt and subtext searching.

A disturbing socio-political epiphenomenon which was immediately on display – starting with a rush of lawyers to say the first piece on the day of the verdict's announcement – is that it seems to have furnished bellicose elements in the majoritarian Right with some grounds to beat a triumphalist drum and to try and revive a more sober-toned 'magnanimous' version of the old macho-sectarian war whoops which for some time had become rather unmarketable. In other words, they can try and revive their *politics* as something *legally vindicated* now. Even more ominously, this unfortunately seems to set the seal of judicial approval on tactics of grand-scale bullying and vandalism – to in effect make the results of subterfuge, vandalising destruction and large scale violence that left a mass graveyard of bodies in its wake sort of 'alright' *ex post facto*, and even ultimately a winning card. The verdict seems to render the *results* of 6 December 1992 irreversible and untouchable, with full legal sanction.

That's a tremendously dangerous precedent. It's a moot point whether the judgment could have taken this precise present form if the mosque were still standing – since that would then have amounted to a court sanction for physical dismantlement of the so-called "disputed structure" to make room for exercise of votive sentiment in point of faith.

That brings us to a related part of the debate that's been doing the rounds. The media and various voices have been making much of the argument that this does not have any bearing or impact on the other case – the one dealing with the destruction of the "disputed structure", which we are reminded by everyone from the Home Minister down is a wholly different case. That's a legalism and it may, for all one knows, be factual balderdash, yet once it enters the arena of 'expert' discourse, it can quickly acquire the status of some profound vatic revelation. But let's look at the facts. What do the facts suggest? Just the commonsense recognition that the case dealing with the demolition of the mosque cannot seriously be claimed to be extraneous to and absolutely delinked from the title suit case – as though the recently adjudicated matter were some routine property dispute among grabby family members or covetous neighbours. The point is moot that the **precise site** under the central dome of a place of worship destroyed on a given date – razed as the endpoint of an unprecedented agitational mobilization that violated restrictive orders and the law of the land and a

Supreme Court stay and resulting in widespread devastation and thousands of lost lives – it is *that very spot* which has now been declared sacred to one of the parties of the title dispute by a subordinate court, citing perceptions of faith as a legitimate basis for so deciding. This declaration has implications for determination of said suit in point of title that needs no footnotes by way of explication. Can the destroyed structure be now rebuilt where the idols were placed that long-shadow December night of 1949 (even judges in the present case accept the reality of the installation) as an act of reparation, after this decree? That simple poser should settle the question as to whether the two cases are indeed so entirely separate and unconnected.

Thus in actuality, the multifold results of that political mobilization culminating in the illegal demolition of the Babri mosque (a traumatic event in the nation's life on which the Liberhan Commission's findings leave little doubt) find a kind of tacit unstated ratification in the findings of the recent Ayodhya judgment. This is the dark twist and complexity in the case – the somewhat sinister link betwixt the twain – that the currently rife legalisms cannot fully smooth glide over. For this at bottom and ipso facto isn't a simple and ordinary property matter. It's in fact all about symbolism, community relations, status of minorities, and relative rights and importance of different communities in a multethnic society, and ultimately about the survival of a secular state and legal system beyond reproach or suspicion of tendentious apportioning of entitlements under a law that is based firmly and unboundingly on fact, principle and constitutionality.

There is also the psychological dimension of this grim history. What in fact was the nature of intention-narratives embedded in the mobilisation that ended in demolition of a structure standing on ground which the present judgment comprehends in its determination of title? Let's try a recall. That movement was openly advertised in on the ground mobilization as being meant to avenge a great historical wrong, namely destruction of temples by Islamic marauders, by building a temple precisely where an offending structure was now seen to stand in the form of the Babri mosque, a structure maliciously and desecratively erected upon a sacred site. The idea was to now do (back) unto a Muslim place of worship what was earlier done to Hindu places of worship in past centuries when Islamic invaders ruled the land – this was pretty much the drift of the RJB discourse, and it was continuously circulated and broadcast by the agitational-propaganda drives preceding the demolition as a more or less clear statement of intent.

Underlying that appeal is an understanding of justice as restitutory punishment appropriately visited upon surrogate others – not just a structure but large numbers of adherents of the Muslim religion fell victim to the aroused wrath of activists. Yet by no stretch of imagination can a principle of

surrogately transferred vindictive penalisation to assuage certain accumulated feelings of humiliation, pass muster as compatible with modern constitutional justice. Such a contretemps is really enactment of atavistic tribal law – the principle of a justice system based on eye-for-eye vendettas – which can be privately visited in perpetuity on kinsmen and heirs of the offenders in virtue of clan loyalties. Modern societies even at their point of emergence undertake as the very possibility of their existence and survival a war on this self-assumed violent administration of law by self-appointed guardians – the Duke's closing speech in *Romeo & Juliet* inveighing against vengeful violence in the streets in the name of privately administered judicial restitution makes clear what's allowable in even an early modern legally organised state, and what is not.

There's another catch too. Even going by the tribal logic that heirs and descendants can be justly held answerable for their kinsmen's and forebears' infringements and may be made to pay the penalty therefor, the present situation fails to fit the bill. Today's Muslim citizens, except in purely rhetorical slogans and sheer demagoguery, can in no serious sense be legally deemed the 'heirs' and 'offspring' of Babar ("*Babar ki santan*"). They, the teeming Muslim citizens of today's India, can hardly be construed as consanguineously related to any past rulers/conquerors owing allegiance to Islam, and as such, even within the primitive antemodern logic of atavistic tribal law, they do not owe restitutional debt for anything the latter might wrongfully and unjustly have done – so the inquiry as to whether Babar did in fact do this or that should have no bearing on Hindu-Muslim relations today, which in fact are at the real flashpoint of all Ayodhya-related problems (and any similar imbroglios) as they obtain today. To grasp this simple basic actuality opens the door to an understanding of the Muslim grievance apropos the burden of guilt and incrimination, and the duty of reparation, that they are asked to carry even in such ostensibly benign invitations as the one that asks them to come join in the grand national task of building a great temple to wipe off a past blot...etc., etc. Indian Muslims today, the designated living recipients of politically activated hurt and rage at misdoings for which former Islamic rulers are held culpable, experience such negative emotion directed at them as wholly unfair and unjustified since they are unrelated to Babar, Mahmud Ghaznavi, Timur Lang, Aurangzeb and sundry other baddies of the historical narrative (needless to say incitatory historical discourse does not dwell a great deal on an amalgamative ruler like Akbar). The hard fact of the matter is that the vast majority of today's 130 million, and predominantly unprivileged, Indian Muslims are not all of them offspring of a single Babar – they are descendants of poor converts of entirely indigenous ethnic extraction – they, like all the rest, are children of India.

Far from any demonstrable links between the nation's Muslim masses and the misdeeds, real, exaggerated or mythicised of former Islamic potentates – an idea which forms the substrate of the great animus that comes into play in each chapter of the Ayodhya dispute – all we really have in the present matter is a few bare facts. For over 400 years a certain mosque stood at a given spot. Idols appeared in it on a particular date coinciding with the early life of free India. Several decades later that mosque was systematically demolished by a gathered set of persons taking the law into their hands with a clear set purpose and undoubted political backing. All this took place upon a spot that is sacred to Hindus. It took place upon a spot also sacred to Muslims since a mosque existed here. Justice Khan has dwelt on this double sacredness of the same spot to the two communities and of the unique tradition of both Hindu and Islamic praying contiguously and alongside each other in one area. If sacredness is the issue, competitive perceptions of sacredness become difficult to resolve and reconcile by appeals to reason. Can the law settle hierarchy in perceptions of faith? How will it adjudicate amongst two different faith perceptions?

From a secular and rationalist perspective, a structure of stones is not so very important, it certainly isn't worth blood baths and endless misery and societal chaos. Those saying we don't need any more mosques and temples in India, why not build a hospital here, build a school representing what a twentyfirst century India's priorities should really be are the sane and moral ones. God after all can be worshipped anywhere – or nowhere. To deep believers His true place, regardless of nomenclature, should be in the hearts of people, and a heart filled to the brim with hatred and bloodlust is unlikely to have much space left over for love, human or divine, so legal partitioning of those inner sanctums would serve little purpose.

In view of this nearly impossible clincher, the psychological dimension of the circulating discourses, emotions and political energies is worth addressing. The Ayodhya movement harvested, fuelled and exacerbated a perception that actually existed, even if it wasn't rife, pervasive and at boiling point: real sensations of humiliation, grievance and resentment among Hindus apropos what happened in the historical past were harnessed and harvested. Secularists have fought shy of frontally addressing this reality for fear of giving credence to a bottomless Pandora's box, yet it needs to be faced that the saffron forces worked on feelings that were really there. Communal mobilisation raised this gamut of feelings to fever pitch, but it didn't entirely invent them. And the principle works the other way around too: one can't build something real in the secular domain except on a foundation of truth, by confronting actualities. One must frontally face and acknowledge the perhaps uncomfortable truth that a discourse of humiliation exists, activates

and politically galvanises. Being in denial of this actuality won't dispel it. Secular defensiveness on facts, even if they be facts on points of perception, will not resolve the underlying dynamics of Hindu-Muslim tensions till it is recognised that conquest and dominion will inevitably have imposed scars and left a trail of negative memorialising that passes transgenerationally as a collective consciousness: this actuality must form part also of a secular engagement with what admittedly is an extraordinarily complex tangle of actualities and reactions. The Babri Masjid was cited during the height of the Ayodhya movement as the symbol of a national shame and dishonour, one that needed to be wiped clean off the besmirched brow of the nation (in this discourse the nation is imagined as definitionally Hindu). A grand Ram temple at this very spot would erase the shame. It would regenerate Hindu pride and restore the nation to sensations of power and glory – sensations that the great Indian middle class at the time was ready for. This basically was the tropology and psychological structure of the saffron argument in the Ramjanmabhoomi *andolan*. The new present phase of the argument is that construction of the temple for said reasons right where the mosque stood, becomes apposite and lawful under terms of the court settlement of the title suit.

Yet in a very basic sense the secularists, considering the matter at the psychological level, do have an iron clad case after all. That is because humiliating, terrorising and creating impotency and helplessness among today's 130 odd million Indian Muslims, is a colossally misplaced effort in seeking restitution because it seeks requital from an irrelevant party, and for dispelling humiliating sensations that never works, in fact it can only create new victims of injustice. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of the present day Muslim population are descended (at the risk of repeating this obvious but usually forgotten or obfuscated key point) not from Uzbeks, Mongols, Turks, Iranians, Arabs or other 'Muslim foreigners', much less are they the direct and blood-related "great-grandchildren" of invading conquistadors and monarchs of such alien origin. India's vast Muslim population (the world's second largest) is made up more or less entirely of persons who or whose ancestors embraced Islam (usually in response to depressed socioeconomic/caste status), and who are of totally native origin and indigenous ethnicity. Targetting them in attempts to undo shame and rage or past powerlessness produced by conquest and dominion will not succeed in erasing such unpleasant sensations since they were not the offenders in question – they simply happen to be coreligionists, but sharing a religion isn't sharing in a conquistador's power or his acts of commission and omission. So now to target utterly disempowered persons for the excesses real or supposed of past power wielders is just discharging upon on an

irrelevant ersatz surrogate victim whose reality totally fails to fit the bill. As the Sachar Committee findings irrefutably show, India's unprivileged Muslim masses are no way modern mirrors of the powerful and privileged potentates that ruled a 'Muslim' India. Besides, a pre-Islamic India had its own share of other conquered peoples and victims of dominion – the Indus valley aboriginals, Dravida ethnic groups, Buddhists, Adivasis...How far will the line of restitution via retribution have to stretch for humiliation to be fully requited and repaired?

In any case, a politics of retributational restitution isn't so easy to sustain in the long run, and in a nation's life, or even a political organisation's calculations, it eventually becomes an investment of diminishing returns. To make compensative humiliation of an ersatz victim meaningful and acceptable by large sections of the population as an answer to social ills in today's world, people must be systematically and ongoingly driven out of their wits, duped and seduced out of reason and compassion, emotionally worked up into a frenzy in whose grip they can no longer think straight, hypnotised by sending out mythological claims bound up with incendiary emotive appeals. Society must be kept on the boil, with periodic seizures and eruptions. Neither amity, nor social harmony, nor normal life, nor business and enterprise can ultimately thrive in such conditions – only some fringe politics gain, and even they only for a while. However the seduction and temptation may be considerable since in the short run it can work and yield dividends because our education fails to encourage critical intelligence, sophisticated analysis and investigation of motives of a Satan whispering convincing fabrications in our ear. If that weren't the case, the educated elites wouldn't be the most reliable vote bank for the most medievalist and retrograde of social ideologies.

The liberal secularist (and Muslim) dilemma further is that history doesn't show bullies being soothed and softened by appeasement and efforts at being conciliatory – it tends to make them feel all the more powerful and hungry for some more. After all, the psychology at work here had to do with an effort to get rid of feelings of historical humiliation and diminishment sourced from many experiences and settings, by creating matching feelings of disempowerment and diminishment in a sanctioned target and 'opposite number'; to compensate feelings of powerlessness by creating feelings of powerlessness. Well, with this psychology, the more the shame and powerlessness one can induce on the other side, the greater become the feelings of power and grandiosity in oneself, so there are few guarantees that one sacrificial move would end the tirade.

Muslims thus find themselves on a sticky wicket. If they give up the claim in favour of communal peace, it means they've been bludgeoned into buying

peace. The problem is – peace at what cost? But if they persist with the title claim in the name of justice...well, then, they are just being churlish, dogmatic and true to type in bull-headedly turning down a chance for peace and refusing to respect and accommodate the deep sentiments of the Hindu majority in what is to the latter a major holy spot. They are also courting future riots, negative racial profiling as bad sports, natural trouble makers, unreasonable bigots, and die hard fundamentalists – that to them is the unspoken subtext in the peace offering that says give up claims in Ayodhya and come join in making that grand temple. It's a no-win situation. Faced with the impossibility of the impasse, a 'peacemaking' Islamic scholar such as Maulana Waheeduddin Khan has advocated that Muslims make a grand conciliatory gesture by giving up their in any case 'unIslamic' claim in Ayodhya altogether (his position isn't significantly different from Justice Sharma's in seeing the Babri mosque as unIslamic and thus as no mosque – because according to the Maulana serious Muslims do not attempt to worship near another's holy spot). In other words, they've had the rough end of the stick long enough to see the wisdom of suing for peace now.

But as for instance the twentieth century example of the Treaty of Versailles so graphically and grimly reminds us, each peace and 'accord' established by a shaming capitulation of any one of the parties to the terms of a settlement, no matter the alignment of forces at a moment and *especially* when a solution is imposed with someone pushed helplessly against the wall, has always a dangerous and often a catastrophic denouement...So there is reason to worry. It, by the looks of the matter, isn't the last of it. There are other potential 'spots' that could become new foci for the search for the unquenchable search for pride – and power – harbouring in arguments of faith. One can only hope that the apex court offers a somewhat more legally and substantively convincing turn to what has emerged here, one that at least partially mitigates and corrects perceived infirmities, iniquities, dangers and damaging strands potentiated in the present judgment.

Perhaps the most sobering dimension of the too-stretched out Babri moment and imbroglio then is that it is not an isolated 'moment' at all, something that, howsoever horrific the contingent eruption, can be kept self-contained and safely localised. It was not just one five centuries old building that was brought down in ruins on that fateful 6th of December, but a certain idea of India – the intactness and integrity of that idea. For in that symbolic dismantlement of an idea as violent retributive action – or perhaps the grim (Re)Dis-cover-y of India amid the debris of what actually lay under/inside the idea of an India many had all along believed in and hoped for – are the seeds of an interminable ongoing history of dismantlement, implosion and disaggregation, although not exactly in seamless linearity or as planned by

anyone. Still, the sensation cannot be bypassed that the last piece of detritus from Babri has not yet finally fallen. That is an eerie awareness.

At this moment, as one looks around the Indian subcontinent, at the spirals of resentment and hatred that have for too long bedevilled interfaith relations and social harmony here, and as one ponders the strangely invidious and violent macrosocietal tendencies in which this has manifested, one cannot but value the profound and eye opening contribution of Alice Miller to the understanding of the deep sources of cruelty in social life, political practice and religious-sectarian strife. If she is right in her extraordinary insight about political violence being the displaced expression of private early humiliations of endless numbers of persons redirected and legitimated as substitutinal social action by ideological, religious or socio-moral sanction, and I believe she substantially is, then one fears that trying to find a lasting fix in relatively superficial administrative or political measures for what cannot be cured or healed thereby, may yield only very limited lasting results, for the springs and sources run much deeper, and yet more close to 'home'.

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Book Reviews

Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, London: Penguin/Allen Lane, 2009, pp. xxviii + 467, £ 25.00

While the search for a 'least unjust society' through a comparative evaluation of social alternatives – existing and non-existing – based on plurality of reasons and principles of democracy, is the central concern of Sen's 'idea of justice', the dogmatic pursuit of a perfectly just society through a set of institutions and behavioural norms remains the main focus of John Rawls and his contemporary and predecessor philosophers of social contract school. These two traditions of thought are not entirely new, and not quintessentially western. The enlightenment movement of the West and 'argumentative' tradition of the East have debated this, oblivious of the existence of such debates in other's society.

The Enlightenment Movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe produced two intellectual traditions in the West: (a) 'contractarian', championed by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Rawls, Nozick and other philosophers of 'social contract school', and (b) 'social realization-focused comparative' approach led by Smith, Condorcet, Wollstonecraft, Marx, Bentham and Mill. The former, Sen also calls 'transcendental institutionalism', 'concentrates its attention on what it identifies as perfect justice, rather than on relative comparisons of justice and injustice' (p.6). Therefore, the 'inquiry is aimed at identifying the nature of 'the just', rather than finding some criteria for an alternative being 'less unjust' than another' (p.6). However, in search of just society and institutions, the contractarians overlook the outcome that is determined by the behaviour of institutions and individuals. On the other hand, the followers of comparative and social realization-focused approach remain engaged in arriving at the least unjust society through 'comparisons of societies that already existed or could feasibly emerge, rather than confining their analyses to transcendental searches for a perfectly just society' (p.7). This raises the latter's concern to the level of 'praxis' that is the removal of manifest injustice in the society.

Sen poses his 'idea of justice' as a departure from both 'transcendental institutionalism' and 'realization-focused comparative' ap-

proaches, though he avowed his closeness to the latter on the ground that its main concern is the search of a least unjust society, out of possible alternatives- existing or non-existing. Hence, he asks differently: 'how would justice be advanced? 'instead of 'what would be perfectly just institutions?' (p.9). Moreover, the concern for the advancement of justice makes Sen to move beyond comparative-focused to realization-focused understanding wherein actual realization of justice in the society is more important than the institutional arrangements *per se*.

Sen has two fundamental problems with 'transcendental institutionalism'. He calls it the problem of (a) 'infeasibility' and (b) 'redundancy', and elaborates both. The search for perfectly just institutions is based on the presumption that there is an agreement arrived through reason on the perfectly just institutions and society. However, the plurality of arguments based on reason, probably, does not allow any agreed solution as to what constitutes justice, or a perfectly just society or just institution. Sen illustrates this difficulty with the anecdotal narration of a story of a flute and three girls.

The story is like this. There are three girl children – Anne, Bob and Carla –and all of them are quarrelling over as to who has a legitimate claim over the flute under dispute. Anne advances her claim on the ground that she is the only one of the three who knows how to play it, and Bob and Carla accept this. Bob, on the other hand, has to say that she is the poorest among the three and being the poorest one, she does not have any other toys to play. This flute, if her claim is accepted, will increase her pleasure. Anne and Carla do not dispute the poorest condition of Bob. Carla stakes her claim on the ground that she has worked very hard for three months to prepare this flute and when the time has come that she can realize the benefits of her labour, these expropriators, Anne and Bob, have come to deprive her of her output of labour. The claim that Carla has prepared this flute is agreed by Anne and Bob. The respective claims of all the three are supported by sound reasons and theories. Utilitarians would come in favour of Anne on the ground that Anne's pleasure would be the strongest, as she is the only one who knows how to play it. Bob's claim, because of her poverty and her deprived of any toys, would be supported easily by economic egalitarians. And Carla's claim would be championed by libertarians. Each one of the three claims is perfectly valid on its own logical ground. But this does not solve the problem of arriving on a perfectly transcendental solution. To Sen, the contractarians are unable to realize this problem of infeasibility.

Next comes the problem of redundancy. If the exercise of reason for the actual choice of perfectly just institutions demands comparison of existing situation, then there is no need to search for transcendently perfect institutions. Sen writes; 'If a theory of justice is to guide reasoned choice of

policies, strategies or institutions, then the identification of fully just social arrangements is neither necessary nor sufficient' (p.15). He illustrates it with another example. 'If we are trying to choose between a Picasso and a Dali, it is of no help to invoke a diagnosis (even if such a transcendental diagnosis could be made) that the ideal picture in the world is the Mòna Lisa' (p.16). Similarly, if the choice has to be made out of possible alternatives, the search for the ideal one is unnecessary.

Sen is critical of comparative approach as well, and advances the argument for 'accomplishment-based understanding of justice' wherein the real life of the people matters more than institutions and rules. He explains: '... justice cannot be indifferent to the lives that people can actually live... Institutions and rules are, of course, very important in influencing what happens, and they are part and parcel of the actual world as well, but the realized actuality goes well beyond the organizational picture, and includes the lives that people manage- or do not manage- to live' (p.18). Here, he elaborates the role of freedom and capability that play an important role in advancing the goal of a just society.

To advance the logic of 'accomplishment-based understanding of justice', Sen draws a distinction between 'arrangement-focused' and 'realization-focused' understanding of justice; the Indian Sanskrit literature on ethics and jurisprudence has articulated it in terms of *niti* and *nyaya*. *Niti* broadly stands for institutions, rules and institutional behaviours, and *nyaya* stands for outcomes of those institutions, rules and institutional behaviours. Sen argues to discard this distinction and suggests taking a wholistic approach towards what he calls 'comprehensive outcome' wherein both processes and outcomes are important, as they are inseparable. He draws this distinction from the story of Arjuna and Krishna, where Krishna tells Arjun to do his duty of a warrior and Arjun is reluctant because he is concerned about the devastating outcomes of the war and because of his performance of duty. Sen concludes that the concern of Arjun was not without reason and it is always a case to 'fare well than fare forward' (p.22). At least in Sen's idea of justice, this matters.

Sen draws attention towards another limitation of transcendental institutionalism that reduces the idea of justice to a search for perfect institutions within a nation state, but does not look justice beyond the boundary of a nation state. In Sen's idea of justice, there is a concern for global justice and, hence, a search for a global arrangement of and for justice.

To some, *The Idea of Justice* may appear less sophisticated than, say, Sen's contemporary Rawls's treatises on justice — *A Theory of Justice* and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* — yet Sen's pragmatic approach to promoting a just society and a better world elevates Sen and *The Idea of Justice* to a plank, other

philosophers of and treatises on justice, except for some 'praxis' oriented, have not arrived. Sen's idea of justice, he appears shy of calling it a theory, is a theory of justice for a more humane and better world.

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Ranjan Chakrabarti, *Terror, Crime and Punishment : Order and Disorder in Early Colonial Bengal 1800-1860*, Reader's Service, Calcutta, 2009; pp. 288 Rs. 595

Ranjan Chakrabarti has attempted to construct a social history of crime and punishment in early colonial Bengal (1800-1860), by bringing in voices 'from below' (viz., legal offenders, dacoits, transportees, forest dwellers, etc). He has analyzed the processes by which certain acts are designated as crimes at particular historical moments, and has located the criminalization of the poor during the nineteenth century as part of a larger strategy for exercising power and legitimating British authority in India.

Chakrabarti argues that with the introduction of the Permanent Settlement, a new system of 'rule of property' began in Bengal, leading inevitably to a greater penetration of British capital and institutionalized political power into the agrarian hinterland. Though it is difficult to accept his rather romanticized view of 'simple' and 'innocent rural folk' and the 'changeless' face of the village community in the pre-colonial period, it is clear that the introduction of rule of property steadily eroded traditional village society, and its established system of justice and social control that worked through village councils, caste bodies, guilds, fines and excommunications. The resultant 'social crisis' of the early nineteenth century was characterized by rampant pauperism, local disorders, and collective unrest in the form of dacoity and affrays. Chakrabarti argues that this led to the rise of a new emphasis on 'rule of law', wherein, (as Radhika Singha has also shown) the colonial state began to assert its monopoly over all instruments of coercive power, and to view crime and public displays of violence as an affront to its authority. There began a greater surveillance over everyday behaviour, and the development of new mechanisms for social control. The rule of law, thus, was the necessary concomitant to the rule of

property (even though Chakrabarti insists simplistically that both were introduced to extract the maximum revenue from Bengal with the minimum possible investment of resources by the colonial state). Rule of law was enforced through the codification of laws, the reorganization of the police, and the emergence of incarceration in the colonial prison as the punishment of first resort.

The colonial police, in particular, were to function as key intermediaries between the British Raj and the new local propertied elites. Chakrabarti suggests that not only was the policing of rural Bengal heavily dependent on the espionage carried out by '*goyendas*' or detective police, the information gathered about colonial subjects was central to the project of knowledge-production in this period. This line of enquiry has been opened, among others, by Clare Anderson, but could be developed still further. For example, Chakrabarti shows how a new order of knowledge was required and produced for the moral transformation of the prisoner. Data about name, sex, caste and social origins, family antecedents, occupation, general character, nature and location of crime committed, details of trial and sentencing, etc., was carefully collated. This could be a useful entry-point to discuss the intersect between discourses centred on race, caste, crime, and the statistical enterprise.

Chakrabarti notes that the colonial police were understaffed, underpaid, insufficiently subordinated to the civil administration, blatantly corrupt, and widely perceived as ineffective and predatory. However, he asserts forcefully that the colonial state was revealed in the alienation of the police from the people, as this prevented the possibility of collusion between the two against the might of the Company's administration. The police in the nineteenth century, with all its corruption, was a 'mechanism of discipline' and a 'lever of control' that sustained empire. Chakrabarti is less convincing when he suggests that the colonial state employed a vast contingent of Indian personnel in order to minimize costs; and that the latter 'felt out of place', moved like an 'unclaimed squad' with 'no effective ideology', and consequently became 'mercenary hordes'. The police administration, he argues, was 'hybrid', 'partly foreign and partly indigenous', without symbiotic integration between these two tiers. The institutional subordination to and ideological integration of the colonial police with the colonial state were both incomplete. What remains unclear is whether this was an unpremeditated consequence of financial expediency, or a deliberate calculation of *realpolitik*. Even more pertinent is the issue of whether it is useful to look for such complete ideological integration within the institutions created by the colonial state, or to accept that 'hybridity' is always associated with certain tensions and gaps.

Apart from the police, Chakrabarti identifies the prison as another mechanism of social control, an element in the Foucauldian 'carceral archipelago' (comprised the prison, the hospital, the factory, the asylum, the barrack and the school) designed to discipline individual bodies. The commensurability of a comparison between the nature of social crisis and institutions of social control developed in an industrializing Europe and a Bengal being overrun by the English East India Company remains debatable. However, Chakrabarti's argument that, increasingly, the success of the colonial regime had come to depend on the success of its criminal administration is valid. So is the assertion that imprisonment had become the punishment of first resort, though why this was so is not clear – especially since the author himself acknowledges later that there is no innate logic or rationality to imprisonment as a system of punishment.

The discussion on the goals of imprisonment in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century is interesting, but the threads of analysis do not always come together. While Chakrabarti is aware of nineteenth century discourses in Europe about criminology and punishment, he does not demonstrate how these influenced the new prison discipline and jail administrators in Bengal. He argues that imprisonment was aimed at incapacitating the criminal; isolating him from the outside world; generating deterrence against future crimes by inflicting the pains of isolation, (often) labour, and (sometimes) transportation; and reforming the criminal. These objectives, however, were not always mutually compatible. In this context, the discussion on prison labour is a very important one. Prison labour was identified not just as an instrument of deterrence (colonial administrators believed that Indians detested hard work above all); but also of reform. Chakrabarti notes that by the 1850s, extramural labour in the jails of Bengal had been almost entirely replaced by intramural labour inside jail manufactories. In the process, the state not only created a deterrent effect, it also gained remuneration. The goal of reform, however, remained largely elusive, and prisons came to be recognized as 'manufacturing units of crime'. The tension between the requirements of deterrence, reform and remuneration, and the impact that this must have had on the development of disciplinary regimes within the prison walls needs to be examined further:

The author draws on extant research to show that instead of recognizing the inadequacies of its own penal system and philosophy, the colonial state repeatedly argued that there were certain 'dangerous classes' in Indian society, predisposed to crime because it was their hereditary occupation, and utterly resistant to reform. Colonial ethnographers like Thurston and Risley described the social and physical characteristics of the so-called 'criminal tribes'. While correctly dismissing the empirical validity of such

claims, Chakrabarti interprets this not as an innovation in policy, but as a re-calibration of the apparatus of social control developed earlier by the colonial state, as yet another form of 'managing and producing the Orient'. Again, he argues that it was cheaper to bring out the rule of law in this way, as opposed to reforming the criminal administration system.

He demonstrates how local zamindars employed *lathials* to perpetrate dacoity and, thus, keep the *ryots* in a state of submission, and settle local instances of affray. With the complicity of the local police, the local zamindars and the dacoits came to constitute an *imperium in imperio* in the Bengal countryside, and the colonial state remained mute since the zamindars underpinned the revenue and local administration of the Raj. The rule of law remained a myth, while the rule of the *lathi* became reality. On the whole, Chakrabarti successfully highlights the limits to the implementation of 'rule of law' and the Utilitarian project of enlarging the role of the government in the countryside.

Chakrabarti also studies two other themes: the practice of transportation and the system of prisoner-in-exile in the Andamans; and contestations between colonial and traditional systems of property, law and justice at the site of the forest. He argues that the colonial state introduced markedly mercenary and profit-oriented policies in the penal settlement in Andamans, and the latter was far less successful than mainland prisons in ensuring either deterrence or reform among criminals. However, this does not go very far towards locating this system in the larger grid of discourses on punishment in colonial Bengal. Chakrabarti also suggests that the general suspicion of the colonial state towards non-sedentary populations crystallized into a specific antagonism against the forest-dwellers of South Asia. These groups controlled vast reserves of timber and other forest resources, and supported an enormous range of livelihoods. When the colonial state set about extending the rule of law into the forest, it criminalized many forms of behaviour pertaining to the hunting and wounding of animals and fishing; and displaced groups like the *shikaris*, who then took to dacoity. Many forest communities were brought within the purview of the Criminal Tribes Act. The argument that colonialism changed forever the relationship between those who lived in the forests and those who lived in the plains is not a new one; it remains important to examine in greater depth the interplay between modes of punishment exercised vis-à-vis forest groups and sedentary populations.

The significance of the introduction of the rule of property and the rule of law in colonial Bengal emerges clearly, but the impact that this had on the discourses on crime and punishment can be delineated more sharply. The insistence on the cost-cutting imperatives of the colonial state as the primary

explanatory category for a host of changes is too simplistic. The complexity of the manner in which ideas about the rule of property, the rule of law, and penal reform were developed in the metropolitan context and translated in a colonial situation gets lost in a framework that emphasizes excessively 'forcible' impositions 'from above'. Overall, this study convincingly argues, within an established historiographical tradition, that the apparatuses of justice, punishment and social control in colonial Bengal were necessarily hybrid – partly metropolitan, partly vernacular – and, therefore, always 'far from omnipotent'. The new sensibilities about property, crime, social status, law, justice and order that the colonial state tried to create remained contested, to say the very least.

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Bhangya Bhukya, *Subjugated Nomads: The Lambadas Under the Rule of Nizams*, Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2010, HB, pp.320; Rs. 550

When imagining a 'Banjara' one always tends to think of a group of people on the move. After all, these nomads are generally forest-wanderers as the Sanskrit word *vana-chara* transliterated as 'forest wanderers' suggests. Bhangya Bhukya's book extended my imagination and made me think, even as it raised many questions in my mind. Was there any social, economic and political transformation of the nomads (Lambadas) over the last two centuries? Why were they subjugated? Why was the colonizer interested in them and what was their position under the rule of the Nizams?

In the *Subjugated Nomads* the author tries to trace the historical transition of the Lambada community of the Hyderabad State under the Nizams during colonial rule. In doing so he reconstructs the social, economic and political history of this particular subordinate and 'subaltern' community, from the early eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. Bhukya also delineates in a rather fresh and detailed manner the Lambadas' interaction with the colonizers, and their experience of colonialism, and apart from it, the way colonialism extended its power and domination over this community. We are provided fascinating details related to the cultural history about this community and their social organization. The power of

this work in fact lies in the fact that the author himself is a Lambada – a point that makes this study a first-hand account.

The basic idea of the author is to examine how the longstanding livelihood practices (caravan trade) of the Lambadas were disturbed during the colonial period, a complexity that marked their shift from a self-satisfied community to achieve a subaltern status. Stereotyped and labeled as a 'criminal tribe' in colonial discourse, the author delineates the emergence of a new form of consciousness and its role in shaping the modern identity of Lambadas, which has played a significant role in the democratic politics of postcolonial India (p. xii).

Divided into five chapters along with an introduction and a conclusion, the book traces various layers of colonial ideology and forms of governance established in the Hyderabad state and how they affected the Nizams and Lambadas in different ways. Further, it examines why, despite the existence of legal and constitutional equality and benefits, subaltern communities like the Lambadas are still subjects of backwardness in the society and politics of postcolonial India.

Along with various archival sources the author has also consulted many literary sources to understand the process of transformation of Lambada community from a self-satisfied and prosperous group of caravan traders into a 'criminal-tribe', and the way in which they created a new community identity during 1930s. It is creditable that the author has tried to go beyond official sources to try and bring forth the views of the subaltern. His exhaustive interviews with the Lambadas of the region (e.g. with Laliya Dhadi, Neradavai Thanda, Sabavat Ramlal Lambada and Mampa Narshimlu, Tajawath Bellaiah Naik, the state President of Nangara Bheri movement, etc.) of Hyderabad in order to understand and highlight their viewpoints. Further, in order to explore their spiritual culture and cultural articulation, he has used oral narratives in the form of '*sakies*' (stories), '*shaval*' (proverbs), and '*geets*' (songs). Last, but not least, the exhaustive bibliography at the end of the book makes this volume substantial and reader/researcher friendly.

According to Bhukya, the introduction of the modern bureaucracy, means of transportation, customs, market regulation, taxation methods, science and technology, colonial medicine and sanitation norms, and the creation of new forms of property relations eventually transformed the state into a capitalist society. This in turn forced the Lambadas to leave their traditional occupation (viz. caravan trade and cattle-raising). As argued, the colonizers experience of 'vagabonds, in their own country made them suspicious and fearful vis-à-vis nomadic communities in India (p.75). In this situation the colonial state initially tried to confine them to agriculture. The Lambadas began to settle on the wasteland and began cattle-raising as a new

occupation. Further, the author argues that the 'so-called' colonial scientific breeding practices and cattle-policing policies stigmatized and marked the Lambadas' cattle as nomadic and worthless for the purpose of cultivation. Apart from it, the regulation of cattle markets, the notion of cattle trespass, and the 'enclosing' of common grazing lands and forest lands, hampered the Lambadas' cattle-raising practice and they were unable to earn a viable livelihood from this alternative occupation. Thus, it is interesting to find that initially the state forced these mobile people to settle down, but later they (state) located the extension of agriculture by the Lambadas as a threat to forest conservation. Consequently, they became the subject of harassment and eviction. Further, the emergence of the zamindari system, saw the emergence of landed sections, who claimed rights over wastelands and extracted taxes from these lands. These policies saw the Lambadas losing their lands through their interactions with usurious moneylenders, *mahajans* and the *sahukars*.

Thus, the colonial state's so-called rationality that aimed to systematize, stabilize and regularize power relations ultimately led to the loss of the Lambadas' cattle wealth and their confinement to settled agriculture. In this situation they lost their authority over caravan trade, breeding and raising cattle. Further, they also lost their rights over the lands where they were forced to settle by the colonial government. These forms of exploitation compelled a few Lambadas to get associated with 'banditry', particularly during famines. It is because of this that the colonial state classified them as a 'criminal tribe'. This tag was detrimental to the social life of the Lambadas, as it prevented them from earning an honest livelihood as they were looked upon with suspicion by society and constantly targeted by the 'law and order' machinery and the agencies of the colonial state and its officials. State policies and the Criminal Tribe Act (hereafter CTA) of 1871, supposedly enabled the state to separate the 'delinquent' from 'honest' subjects. Nevertheless, the author critiques the tyrannical and exploitative CTA. He mentions how if any group had no specific occupation and residence, they were notified as a 'criminal' tribe or caste, and not only this, but they were confined in a particular village. Huge fine was imposed on them, along with physical punishment and sometimes they were shifted to reformatories (p.118). Thus, the author examines the various methods – viz. the 'legal', coercive and reformatory methods of the colonial state, through which the 'criminal' communities were policed. He also mentions how besides the police-force, the state sought to 'check' this community through the village authorities, dominant castes and landlords.

This policy of policing the 'criminal community', implied that the Lambadas had to go through the most discriminatory and inhuman

treatment, which included the anthropometry method that was used to identify 'criminal communities' and 'gangs'. Through the physical measurement of their bodies the state enforced CTA the tag of 'criminality' on those whom they were insecure of. This process also included the effort to control their activities and 'criminality', through the introduction of a reform agenda that included 'criminal settlement', which embraced a number of institutions—educational, military, and punitive. These were designed to create disciplined and submissive individuals.

The author has also examined the strategies of resistance against land eviction and exploitation adopted by the Lambadas. As he puts it, this led the Lambadas to revolt, which, at the end of the Nizams' rule, got transformed and linked to the Telangana armed struggle under the leadership of Communist Party of India. He also shows how the Lambadas adapted themselves to the new forms of rationality and governance on their own terms. They responded to the challenges through a programme of self-reform, through two powerful cultural movements. These included the movement led by the religious saint Seva Bhaya, who rearticulated Lambada history, spiritual beliefs and culture; the second reform was inspired incorporating the idea of education. The author mentions the *sanskritization* movement through their oral tradition, which created a new social and political consciousness among the Lambadas. This led to the development and growth of a new consciousness and identity that enabled them to negotiate the modern apparatus of the state. They tried to improve their situation in the neighbourhood, society and also in the eyes of police (p. 209). This provided them a powerful means to be able to claim a new role and place in the politics and society of independent India.

This is indeed a stimulating book for scholars/researchers, teachers and students associated with the social sciences and all those who yearn to learn about itinerant travelers, nomads and *banjaras*, including their life, struggle and achievements, role and contribution to the politics and society of both pre and postcolonial India.

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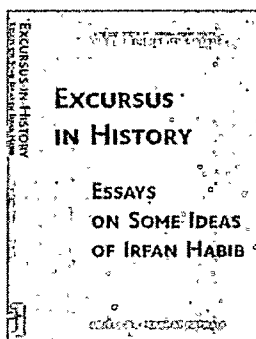
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Prabhat Patnaik, till recently Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Board, Government of Kerala. He is the author of *Time, Inflation and Growth* (1988), *Economics and Egalitarianism* (1991), *Whatever Happened to Imperialism and other essays* (1995), *Accumulation and Stability under Capitalism* (1997), *The Retreat to Unfreedom* (2003), *The Value of Money* (2008) and *Re-Envisioning Socialism* (2011). He is the Editor of *Social Scientist*.

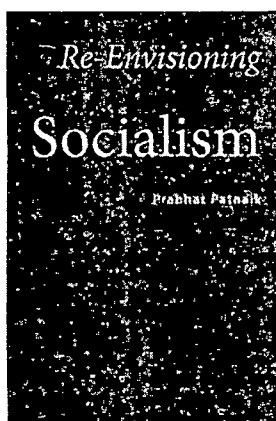
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Re-Envisioning Socialism

PRABHAT PATNAIK

2011 • 9.5 x 6.25 inches • 284 pages

ISBN: 978-81-89487-75-1 (Hb) • Rs 550

The papers collected in this volume, though based on a certain understanding of the capitalist economy, are by and large not papers on economics. They mainly concern issues of politics and ideology, and are informed by a perception that can be summarized as follows. A capitalist economy is a self-driven or, in the words of Oskar Lange, a 'spontaneous' system. State intervention

in its functioning, driven by political compulsions, tends to make it dysfunctional. This necessitates either further interventions, leading recursively to a transcendence of the system itself, or a progressive slide-back to the pre-intervention state. To say this is not to suggest that capitalism does not need the state. It does, not only for the maintenance of capitalist property relations and the 'rules of its game', and for providing it, through the acquisition of colonies and semi-colonies, with the external, pre-capitalist surroundings that are necessary for its functioning; but also for accelerating, through its intervention, its immanent tendencies. But state intervention that is contrary to its immanent tendencies is what makes capitalism dysfunctional, setting up a dialectics either of subversion of the logic of capital or of subservience to the logic of capital. It follows from this that all the shibboleths of capitalism, namely freedom, democracy and individual subjectivity, are actually unachievable under capitalism. They can be realized only if the spontaneity of the economic terrain is broken through a transcendence of the system and the coming into being of another system, socialism, where the nature of property relations is such that it gives people the ability to shape their economic lives through collective political intervention. The case for socialism, in short, arises precisely because capitalism is not a malleable but a spontaneous system.

Prabhat Patnaik, till recently Professor of Economics at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is currently Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Board, Government of Kerala. He is the author of *Time, Inflation and Growth* (1988), *Economics and Egalitarianism* (1991), *Whatever Happened to Imperialism and other essays* (1995), *Accumulation and Stability under Capitalism* (1997), *The Retreat to Unfreedom* (2003) and *The Value of Money* (2008). He is the editor of the journal *Social Scientist*.

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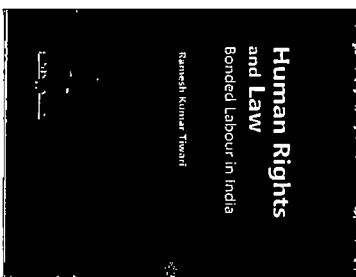
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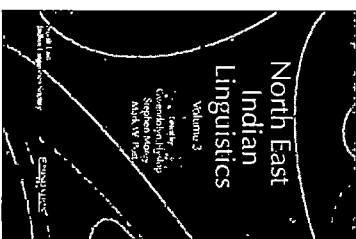
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Editorial

The current number of *Social Scientist*, unlike several of its predecessors, has research articles not around a common theme but on a set of diverse themes. Manjari Katju's lead article is more than what its title suggests. The *Hindutva* elements' perception of the "Hindu" community being unfree and oppressed, and the conclusion that it can be "free" only with the formation of a *Hindu Rashtra*, involve, obviously, a vastly different concept of "freedom" from that which underlies the modern emancipatory project, namely the flowering of *individual* creativity; but in the process of making this unexceptionable point the author gives a highly instructive account of the unfolding of the entire *Hindutva* project, which constitutes the real hallmark of the paper. Of special interest here is the story of the setting up of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad by its parent body, the RSS.

M.Raghavan's paper discusses the merit of the suggestion made by a government-appointed committee that the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) should be made a statutory body and its recommendations binding on the government. He comes to the conclusion that the Minimum Support Price fixed by the Commission should be made statutory, but not the Commission itself. But while doing so, he gives a fairly detailed account of the different phases through which agricultural price fixing in India has proceeded since the formation of the CACP and the contradictions that underlie the process of price-fixing. Of special interest here is the manner in which the government has been withdrawing from its procurement and distribution operations in the period of neo-liberalism and leaving the field free for corporate and MNC players. Its faith in the "free market", a euphemism for appeasing international finance capital, even led it to institutionalize forward trading in agricultural commodities including foodgrains on the basis of highly dubious economic arguments. Though the post-2008 price surge has halted it somewhat in its neo-liberal tracks, it has already given enough indications, such as advocating cash transfers in lieu of public distribution of food, that its march in that direction will continue.

Rashmi Sharma's paper on the international migration of women draws attention to an extremely important issue on which

there has been very little discussion in this country, namely human trafficking. The Emigration Bill proposed by the central government is concerned primarily with restricting numbers of migrants, both into and out of the country, by channelizing migration through certain recognized channels. But it says nothing about the conditions under which the migrant workers are made to work and the protection of their human rights. Indeed India is not even a signatory to the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of Human Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which entered into force on July 1, 2003. Since the Gulf countries to which a substantial part of the migration of poor people from India occurs are also not signatories to this Convention, there is not even the feeblest protection at present for the rights of migrant workers.

Finally we publish a paper by V.Rajesh which shows how the patronage of the colonial administration in Madras in the nineteenth century was extended only to the production and printing of Tamil grammar and dictionaries, which had a purely functional role, rather than to the publication of any literary classics. The State did not even support the small printers who were bold enough to venture into the production of such literature on their own. It is only later that the production of Tamil classics received a degree of support, not from the State, but from some of the zamindars and members of the English-educated indigenous middle class. Though many in this middle class were employed in the State machinery, the support they provided was in their private capacity.

The Understanding of Freedom in Hindutva¹

Manjari Katju

The word 'freedom' is one of the most commonly used words of our times. It is deployed with varied meanings and inflections in public discourse and has, as an ideal, become hegemonic. Whether as freedom from interference or as freedom for self-realisation there is hardly any contestation on the political desirability of freedom and there is rarely an argument in the public space or within academia which questions or counters the desirability of freedom for each individual. The significance of this universal acceptance of freedom can be sensed from the fact that 'freedom' was a deeply contested idea less than a century back. Whether it was in political, social or philosophical fields, freedom was a fiercely contested moral good.

The idea of freedom has a rich and complex history in modern India. The history of ideas of freedom in India is much older and more widespread than the political battle for national self-realisation. The 'social reform' discourse talked about the rights of women and the underprivileged castes to be free from oppressive socio-cultural practices. The debate on the expansion of freedoms in the social sphere preceded the struggle for political freedom. The colonial setting provided an arena where many of these practices were debated and opposed by the local intelligentsia.² This struggle for 'swaraj' provided the political foundation for implanting and spreading the idea of freedom. Here freedom implies self-determination from colonial rule and requires the building of a national self. In many ways, this battle continues for social freedoms even when the idea of freedom as a moral good has become hegemonic. With independence individual freedoms emerged, which flowed from the liberal principles of the Indian constitution. Unlike the political and social ideas of freedom which were based on communities, these ideas of individual freedoms have the citizen as their locus.

As would be evident to any observer of contemporary India, while the *idea* of freedom is un-contested and hegemonic, freedom is a deeply contested practice in social and individual spheres. While the political movements working to expand freedom have many victories, the social, political and ideological forces which try to stem this tide are far from defeated. Whether it is the question of caste unfreedom, patriarchal unfreedoms, the failure to guarantee the

fundamental rights of the citizen or the failure of the State to protect the freedom of the individual to make varied choices of how to live the good life, the battle for freedom is far from won.

What is interesting for a social scientist is that those who try to stop the expansion of freedom do not question the idea of freedom but engage in this ideological battle by *re-defining* the idea of freedom in a manner which would keep their privileges intact. States have justified coercion or clamped on freedoms in the name of individual or public good. In more recent times national security, economic development, public order become some of the justifications for curbing individual freedoms, the argument being that these goals lend meaning to 'freedom' and conversely that without these, freedom is meaningless. Much attention has been focussed on the elaboration of the idea of freedom, both in thought and practice, by the social forces and movements which are for expanding freedom. Attention has also been paid to the manner in which the idea of freedom is sought to be re-defined, often with success, by those forces and movements of the totalitarian kind, which want to curtail this expansion of freedom.

This article focuses on the second category and looks at how the idea of freedom is framed in Hindutva. The attempt here is to probe what freedom means to the Sangh Parivar (this refers to the conglomeration of political, social and cultural organisations tracing their ideological and organisational roots to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or the RSS) and how it is projected in its politics. I explore whether freedom is re-defined by the Sangh Parivar or it works out its own conception of freedom within the classical understandings of freedom in political thought. In doing so, I draw upon the Hindutva ideology as expressed mainly by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). The VHP, as a mass front of the Sangh Parivar, represents Hindutva in all its ideological purity unadulterated by the pressures of electoral politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Its statements and writings thus give a truer picture of the ideological edifice of Hindutva and its political operations.

Before one goes to a discussion of the VHP, it would be useful to look at the views of V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar – ideologues who paved the path which the Sangh Parivar traverses. The former theorised Hindutva the way we know it today. The latter built it up as a functioning political programme with mass fronts in India and overseas. The views of Golwalkar are analysed in greater detail as he directly inspired the growth of the Sangh Parivar, and, the organisation which he led, the RSS, is the force behind the strength of present day Hindutva.

The Understanding of Freedom in Hindutva

Manjari Katju

'Swarajya and Swadharma'

Contemporary Hindutva owes much to V.D. Savarkar, who conceptualised the ideological edifice called 'Hindutva' which forms the core of Hindu nationalism today.³ An independent Indian nationhood for Savarkar was inseparable from Hindu nationhood or Hindutva. Militarism and aggression, according to Savarkar, were justified for protecting and furthering the Hindu nation. Savarkar, in his *The War of Independence of 1857*, wrote that *Swarajya* and *Swadharma* went together and were 'not contradictory' (Savarkar 1909: 8). '*Swaraj*, without *Swadharma* is despicable and *Swadharma* without *Swaraj*, is powerless' (Savarkar 1909: 8). And, *Swarajya* had to defend *Swadharma* with violence if need be – the 'sword of material power' had to be 'ready-drawn' for this purpose (Savarkar 1909: 8).

Self-rule and religion went together and in fact, were tied together in a symbiotic relationship. Politics was a base and worthless exercise without religion guiding it. Religious politics was the most powerful force against colonial rule. Independence from colonial rule was important to prevent the onslaught of alien power on indigenous cultural practices and thus the destruction of a community. He wrote, 'The command of God is, Obtain *Swaraj*, for that is the chief key to the protection of *Dharma*. He who does not attempt to acquire *Swaraj*, he who sits silently in slavery, he is a atheist and hater of Religion. Therefore, rise for *Swadharma* and acquire *Swaraj*' (Savarkar 1909: 9). Self-rule or independence from colonialism was essential for nurturing and strengthening one's cultural identity. These ideas were extended further as a defence of Hindu identity against non-Hindu forces that were portrayed as inimical to the flourishing of Hindu *sanskriti*.

Hindutva

For Savarkar, as he writes in his work *Hindutva* (1923), the 'conflict of life and death' began when Mohammad Ghazni 'invaded her (Sindhusthan)' (Savarkar 1923: 42). However, this common foe helped cementing ties of nationhood, for according to Savarkar, 'Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a state as the pressure of a common foe' (Savarkar 1923: 43). He further writes, 'In this prolonged furious conflict our people became intensely conscious of ourselves as Hindus and were welded into a nation to an extent unknown in our history' (Savarkar 1923: 44-5). The people collectively defended themselves as Hindus and not as separate creeds or sections. He says, 'This one word, Hindutva, ran like a vital spinal cord through our whole body politic and made the Nayars of Malabar weep over the sufferings of the Brahmins of Kashmir' (Savarkar 1923: 46). For Savarkar Hindutva is not identical with Hinduism; the latter was just 'a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva' (Savarkar 1923: 2). Hindutva for him was 'not a

word but a history'; and not just a 'spiritual or religious history' but a 'history in full' (Savarkar 1923: 2). He wrote that Hindutva encompasses all thought and action of the 'whole Being of our Hindu race' (Savarkar 1923: 3). According to him there were three essential criteria of Hindutva or being a Hindu, these were: paternal descent; common blood or a racial bond called *jati*; and, a common civilization or *sanskriti* (Savarkar 1923: 90, 110).

This conceptualization left out the Muslims and Christians as according to Savarkar they did not follow Hindu culture and did not see the land of their birth as a Holyland (Savarkar 1923: 101, 113). Savarkar's statement, 'Hinduise all politics and militarise all Hindudom' tells of a strong, chauvinist, Hindu nationhood in an independent India. As president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, Savarkar was strongly critical of Gandhi's non-violence and Congress' efforts to integrate the Muslims. He was for a strong and militaristic Hindu India which kept the Muslims in check.⁴ What this implies is that 'freedom' as a concept was meaningful and applicable only to the Hindu race. The others, like the Muslims, had to be checked and kept under control. They did not have the same political status as the Hindus for the simple reason that they were not qualified to be Hindus. They were not part of Hindutva, the defining feature of free India as laid out by Savarkar. As such they stood outside the pale of nationhood.

These ideas provided the foundations of the Sangh Parivar edifice which grew over the years. First under K.B. Hedgewar but more substantially under M.S. Golwalkar, these ideas matured as an ideology in operation.

'National Regeneration'

An ideologue as well as an active worker, M.S. Golwalkar was instrumental in the growth of Hindutva as a functioning project. Golwalkar shunned publicity and believed in building his organization quietly. He kept away from the freedom struggle to avoid controversy and British attention.⁵ It was under the leadership of Golwalkar that the RSS grew into a broad based organisation with mass fronts. The VHP was one of these frontal organizations in whose formation in the mid-1960s Golwalkar took an active interest. It is revealing to see what meanings of 'freedom' are implicit in Golwalkar's writings. He did not participate in the anti-colonial struggle but this did not stop him from reflecting on the question of self-rule and independence. As one reads in *We or our Nationhood Defined*⁶, for Golwalkar *Swaraj* and independence signified 'national regeneration' (Golwalkar 1939: 3). By this he implied Hindu national resurgence. He interpreted 'swa' as 'our kingdom', implying a Hindu political formation, and like Savarkar, who spelt out 'who is a Hindu', put forth the question 'who are we?' (Ibid).

According to him with the passage of time 'consciousness of the one

Hindu Nationhood became musty and the (Hindu) race became vulnerable to attacks from outside' (Ibid: 9-10). Also, 'over-individualization' led to subordination of the Nation (Ibid: 10). Clearly, his road map for Hindutva did not have much to offer by way of individuation of the polity and its choice based foundation. It had nothing to do with 'freedom' as a baggage of individual rights or an emancipatory condition for the individual. He kept his organization aloof from the notion of freedom that placed the individual before the primordial community. This individual was only a 'minor element' and 'valued as a part of a group and of an historical continuum' (Andersen and Damle 1987: 6).

For him Hindu national regeneration was the most important task at hand as it meant real independence. Freedom, for him, would be realized with the complete realization of the Hindu nationhood. However, this national regeneration had also nothing to do with an all-inclusive plural idea of a nation as espoused by the leaders of the Indian independence movement. In fact, Golwalkar, as the RSS leadership before him, distanced the entire RSS bandwagon from the plural idea of an Indian nation as conceptualized by the Indian freedom struggle, where all communities would retain the right to be themselves.

A State of War

Golwalkar insisted that the Hindus were in a state of war and had to fight for their freedom. The nature of this war was more religio-cultural than militaristic. He wrote in 1939, 'Ever since that evil day, when Moslems first landed in Hindusthan, right upto the present moment the Hindu Nation has been gallantly fighting on to shake off the despoilers....the war goes on and has not been decided yet' (Golwalkar 1939: 12). For him the Hindus were engaged in a 'triangular fight', that is, with the Moslems on the one hand and Britain on the other (Ibid: 14).

For him inclusive nationalism went against a free and resurgent Hindu nation. He saw this kind of accommodative nationalism as standing for a defeatist political stance which strengthened hostile cultural forces. He wrote, 'In our self-deception, we go on seceding more and more, in hopes of "Nationalising" the foreigners and succeed merely in increasing their all-devouring appetite' (Ibid). According to him, democracy as articulated by the Indian national movement held little meaning for Hindu nationhood as it negates the ownership of Hindus over the Indian nation. For him true democracy would stand for religio-majoritarian rule. He wrote, '....we have almost completely lost sight of our true Hindu Nationhood, in our wild goose chase after the phantasm (sic) of founding a "really" democratic "State" in the country (Ibid).

Highly critical of the secular nationalism of the Indian National Movement, Golwalkar viewed the intelligentsia attached to the Congress as 'deculturised' and 'denationalized' Hindus who enslaved themselves to the English (Ibid: 61). The 'want of National Consciousness has been the cause of our ills' (Ibid).

He concludes this tract by calling upon the Hindus to 'remount' their 'throne', to 'respond to the awakened Race-spirit' and 're-rouse' their 'national consciousness' (Ibid: 67).

Independence is Not Complete Freedom

Writing later, he said that *Swaraj* which was attained in 1947 was predicated on the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity which 'was the greatest treason on our society' (Golwalkar 1966: 152), the result of which was the 'Hindus were defeated at the hands of Muslims in 1947' (Ibid:152). To quote Golwalkar again,

...for the first time in 1947, we gave up the fight, put an ignoble end to the glorious one-thousand-year-long struggle for national freedom, surrendered all our rights and acquiesced in an unchallenged domination of the aggressor over huge portions of our land.

That was the bitter fruit of the continuous draining out of the spirit of self-confidence from the Hindus by the suicidal slogan of 'no *Swaraj* without Hindu-Muslim unity' indulged in by our leaders (Ibid: 153).

The partition thus for him as for many others was a big disappointment but for him it was nothing less than a Hindu defeat. According to him, the leadership (the reference here obviously is to the Congress) which was responsible for this 'only came as a bitter climax of the despicable tribe of so many of our ancestors who during the past twelve hundred years sold their national honour and freedom to foreigners, and joined hands with the inveterate enemies of our country and our religion in cutting the throats of their own kith and kin to gratify their personal egoism, selfishness and rivalry' (Ibid). He again exhorts the Hindus to once more stand up in their 'true and full stature and boldly assert' that they 'shall elevate the Hindu National Life in Bharat to the peak of glory and honour which has been its birthright since hoary times' (Ibid:157).

Thus, the independence which was won in 1947 from British colonial rule did not constitute a victory for Golwalkar because the leaders agreed to partitioning India. For him the fight for independence or freedom had to continue till the victory of Hindu nationhood. The territorial notion of nationalism which gave centrality to the idea of cultural inclusiveness was for him a betraying of the Hindu nation rather than laying the foundation for complete freedom. He depraved what he called the '*serai* theory' of territorial

nationalism (Golwalkar 1966:142). For him the true sense of self-rule and freedom would be attained when Hindu nationality pervades the land of 'Hindusthan'. In cultural inclusiveness and plural nationalism lay the vanquishing of the Hindu national spirit. So for him, rather than freedom and victory, it is betrayal and submission, which is writ large on the face of the nation.

Here one needs to note that political independence was seen as an incomplete project by many across the ideological spectrum – from the Left to the Right. The Left saw the defeat of British colonialism as a stage in the struggles of the Indian people. For them the Indian masses had to intensify their struggle against bourgeois-landlordism. The Left strived for an egalitarian society and a larger emancipation. Gandhi himself was disappointed and felt that a lot more needed to be done for harmonious relations between communities and making India more inclusive without which independence had little meaning. In his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech Nehru said, 'Freedom and power bring responsibility'. Nehru felt that goals of ending poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity needed incessant striving and that the achievement of independence was just a step – an opening of opportunity.

Right-wing Hindutva, on the other hand, saw independence as incomplete because the British were gone but their place had been taken over by a secular 'anti-Hindu' leadership. This was a defeat of Hindu nationhood at the hands of secular-democracy. It seems that the challenges to social hierarchy and patriarchy that were inherent in secular-democracy made the Hindu elite seriously uncomfortable and uneasy. It is not surprising therefore, that Hindu ideologues called upon Hindus to unite and build a strong Hindu India – a way to preserve the social privileges they were used to. For them true independence meant Hindu assertion against the secular-democratic state and the minorities.

Colonial Rule and Social Divisions

At one of the early conferences of the VHP, Golwalkar alluded to the British policy of divide and rule as a strategy of British political domination. But he differed from the leadership of the freedom struggle on this.⁷ For him the divide and rule policy was something deplorable not because it created fissures in Hindu-Muslim relations, but because it created divisions *within* Hindus. For him this policy divided 'Hindu society' into 'Adim, Adivasis, Vanavasis, Harijans, etc., with the purpose of isolating them from each other and from the national society. He said that 'we' are suffering from the consequences of this policy even after 20 years of independence.⁸ That Hindu society is still subject to social schisms. He wanted these 'false' notions to be

dispelled and efforts to be made to unite 'our great Hindu society'. This responsibility he placed with the VHP.⁹ He called upon the *acharyas* and *gurus* to 'move in society and reclaim all those who have been lost to the (Hindu) Dharma'¹⁰ and declared that the government will not come to the help of the Hindus and they have to help themselves.¹¹ The newly formed VHP started the work of Hindu regeneration by taking upon itself the task of combating conversions to Islam and Christianity and unleashing a campaign against Left/communist ideas. These three, according to the RSS leadership, were 'alien ideologies with evil eyes' and the Hindu society had to protect itself of these three.¹²

At this time, that is, the 1960s, there is hardly any direct reference to 'freedom' as the ideal of the Indian independence struggle or as a value per se. But there are statements that ask Hindus to help themselves. What is being conveyed is that as freedom as self-rule has already been accomplished, the Hindus can now begin the work of self-consolidation. The VHP leadership calls upon them to be more religiously inclined and bond together as one community. Jayachamaraja Wadeyar (erstwhile Mysore ruler), the president of the VHP from 1965 to 1969, addressing the Executive Committee of VHP at Mysore in 1965 said, 'We are passing through an age facing disastrous situations which can be met successfully only by practicing our Dharma, which is unique and as old as our society...The age in which we live demands greater cooperation and vigilance...'¹³

The sense one gets in reading the published speeches and works of the VHP of the 1960s is that 'independence' from British colonialism had been achieved, but still the consequences of the divisionary policies of the British government loom large over Hindu society, as also of the 'denationalisation' and 'deculturalisation' of the Hindu elite, which form the bulk of the Congress. In fact, 'independence' as a national achievement is downplayed. Attention is focused on making efforts to identify the causes of, what is called, Hindu degeneration and make amends. The term 'degeneration' comes up repeatedly followed by the message that the Hindus have to work out a strategy themselves to move out of this state. There are direct and indirect references to how Christianity and Islam are moving ahead and the Hindus are not doing enough to go along the same path. On the other hand, they are on the defensive.

In other words, in the 1960s matters regarding the 'protection' and 'preservation' of the Hindu community pre-occupy the RSS-VHP leadership which according to them need immediate attention. There is a need felt by them to get together and organize a socially cemented Hindu community – a means to a larger political end. The VHP thus launches its career with a focus on the tribal communities especially in north-eastern India. The tribal

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communities were seen by the RSS camp as being lured away from the Hindu fold by the Christian missionaries. The VHP also was given the task of ensuring that Hindu immigrant in Africa and Europe did not fall 'prey' to what were seen as western cultural values and Islam and Christianity.¹⁴

Freedom from Colonial Rule A Necessary Condition

In the late 1970s, the view within the Sangh Parivar was that the eclipse of freedom for several centuries had arrested the uninterrupted growth of 'our' nation.¹⁵ Freedom from colonial rule was thus recognized as something needed for the nation to march forward. Quoting the source,

It could be only after regaining our freedom that we have some respite to reflect on our faults and failings, omissions and commissions, undesirable customs and contaminations which have cropped up in our social complex, and some disastrous impressions and attitudes created by the impact of overbearing ideas planted by the parade of alien invaders and erstwhile rulers.¹⁶

Freedom from colonial rule here is seen as a necessary historical phase in working towards more urgent tasks of Hindu nation-building. It is interesting to note that the leadership of the independence struggle also saw independence as a necessary condition but this was for the very dignity of the Indian nation and for its equality with the rest of the world community. This national freedom was also needed for going about the task of economic regeneration, national unity and social justice and in such a manner which affirmed the social freedoms expected by the underprivileged sections of Indian society. The RSS' aim on the other hand was to work for Hindu political consolidation within a united Indian territory and to undo the perceived wrongs to the Hindus (more on this later). According to it, the Hindus had been rendered weak and divided especially after partition. This weakness had made the Hindu nation a prey to 'other' communities, something it had to reverse by its own efforts.

The RSS saw the VHP as an organization which would handle this problem. It shaped the VHP in such a manner that it would draw minimal challenges on the issue of legitimacy. The VHP was to be a religious organization. In this way it would not have a difficulty in finding a social foothold and when need be extending it. The VHP took upon itself to 'diagnose the present problems' and 'create a consensus of the people in favour of adopting the ways suggested by the wise'.¹⁷ It said,

We, therefore, appeal to all the learned and the experienced to help the Parishad in arriving at and presenting to the Hindu World precepts for national behavior which will once more become universally acceptable.¹⁸

Here the emphasis is again on national culture and the way a nation should act. The time had come to repair the damage that was done to the Hindus. Interestingly, this was the post-emergency period. The RSS had been banned by the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi and RSS cadres, including its *sarsanghchalak*, Balasaheb Deoras, had been arrested. The RSS' anti-Congressism spurred the Sangh Parivar activism against the Emergency regime. According to Kanungo, the RSS played a key role in the struggle against Emergency and its cadres formed the backbone of the Lok Sangharsh Samiti that spearheaded the 'JP movement' (Kanungo 2003: 184). Post-emergency, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh formed a major component of the Janata Party government. The RSS grew rapidly during the Janata regime (Ibid: 186). Thus, it is not surprising that the politics of these years was seen more positively by the VHP and all those who had participated in the anti-Emergency struggle.

Ram Janmabhoomi and 'Liberation'

Conversions to Islam in 1981 in Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu, triggered a hysterical reaction among the Sangh Parivar. It produced a highly charged mobilisational vigour among the Hindutva organisations. The mobilisational campaigns among Hindus were carried forth through slogans of 'Hinduism in danger'. It is from now onwards that the cultural imprisonment and religious domination rhetoric acquires shrill tones and is built as a national political campaign by the Sangh Parivar. To put this development in perspective, one must mention that the Janata coalition had fallen and become discredited followed by the come-back of Mrs. Gandhi with a renewed political energy at the centre.

The VHP got to work and organised the *ekamtata yatras* to unite the Hindus in the early 1980s against the threat of conversions. It became extraordinarily serious about its campaigns to stop conversions as also to reconvert Muslims and Christians (Andersen and Damle 1987: 134; Katju 2003: 35). This mass activism continued followed by campaigns on Ayodhya. The coming to prominence of the VHP in the late 1980s in fact is associated with what is well known as the Ramjanmabhoomi 'liberation' campaign. In their first meeting as the Dharma Sansad at Delhi, 528 *sants* participated and resolved to liberate Ramjanmabhoomi.¹⁹ This campaign was led by the VHP and it was launched as central to the pride of the Hindus and as liberation of Hindus from centuries of 'bondage' – a bondage which the Hindus have lived under first during the 'Muslim rule', then during 'British rule'. The editorial of the silver jubilee issue of *Hindu Vishva* (VHP's newsmagazine cum journal) says,

During the centuries under the foreign yoke, Bharath had lost touch

with the depth of the wisdom of Rishis...In fact, the society had lost even the consciousness of itself being an age-old nation. Under the spell of the foreigner, the society has (sic) begun to doubt and dispute its own existence as a nation. Even after the British left the vertieges (sic) of foreign domination predominate. The fact of our being a nation, the Hindu Rastra, since ages, is still under challenge in the sphere of politics. The foreign lobbies in that sphere whether the communists or the Sham-secularists or their adjuncts still continue to strive to confuse the gullible.²⁰

As the above statements depict, for the VHP and its associate groups, the 'oppression' of the Hindu community did not come to an end in 1947, but has continued under the rule of the so called secularists in their various political shades. In fact, during the communally surcharged atmosphere in Meerut in 1987, slogans like 'India has not achieved independence but has only transformed from British slavery to minority slavery' were repeatedly heard (Srivastava 1999: 188). The partition of the country was seen as the beginning of the bondage under independent rule. From this 'hindu' point of view the partition of India was an extremely unwelcome event, a 'curse'.²¹ It meant the taking for granted of the so called Hindu tolerance and goodwill for pleasing the Muslims. In the words of Vishnu Hari Dalmia, former president of the VHP, 'At the time of independence, the most painful event was the partition of India on the basis of the two-nation theory'.²² What is seen as unacceptable is that even after partition the 'country was not declared as Hindu nation'²³ and the politicians kept directing their efforts towards Muslim votes.²⁴ Dalmia goes on to say, '...After attainment of independence, the anti-Hindu policies adopted by the political leaders made it apparent that unless Hindu society gets organised soon to protect its interests, the Hindus would be forced into a life of indifference and neglect in their own country. Not only this, but if Hindus do not get organised, the Hindu society's identity itself would be endangered'.²⁵ The VHP states in a mobilisational pamphlet, 'In independent India we cannot tolerate insults like the destroyed (by foreigners) Shri Ramjanmabhoomi, Shri Krishnajanmabhoomi and Kashi-Vishwanath temples. The VHP has awakened the masses to wipe out this insult'.²⁶ It calls upon the Hindus to resolve to build a Ram temple. It is this firm resolve, it says, which no one would be able to stop. It is said that once the Hindus decide to build the temple, 'let's see who stops us!'²⁷ For the VHP the Hindu national regeneration as also national liberation is tied with the 'liberation' of Ramjanmabhoomi followed by the liberation of the other two.

What is interesting is that it is not the idea of 'freedom' but the idea of 'unfreedom' which pervades the Hindutva mobilisational efforts led by the VHP during this time. Descriptions like 'under control of', 'under the attack

of, 'in danger', 'state of bondage', 'state of decline' etc., are used to describe the status of the Hindu community. It is projected as culturally imprisoned and lacking liberty to be itself in its 'own' country and outside. In the words of a VHP member,

Hindu society and Hindu Dharma throughout the world is being attacked from all sides in the field of politics, religion, economics and social life. If we want to protect the same and the future of our children we should urgently chalk out a programme of action to educate and enlighten the Hindus and others about the noble and great Hindu culture and Dharma. The programme should also cause greater awareness among Hindus, regarding the dangers to Hindu society and Hindu Desh.²⁸

This perceived collective bondage of 'citizens' is due to the activities of those regarded as 'non-citizens' or only partial citizens of the country. These attacks are stated as coming from the Christians and the Muslims, at home and overseas, who are portrayed as exercising a firm influence on the non-BJP political leadership. And, these communities in their attacks seem to be encouraged by the secular governments. According to VHP's Dharma Sansad, the Hindus are being slandered as communal; on the contrary, the minorities are being pampered.²⁹ Also, that Muslims and Christians have been 'given complete freedom to increase their number through infiltration and conversions whereas Hindus are being prevented from increasing their numbers through family planning programmes'.³⁰ The bondage imagery is vividly used. It is further stated that while Hindus have been tied with 'legal chains', the minorities have been given 'special rights through constitutional articles numbers 29, 30 and 370'.³¹ The Dharma Sansad goes on to say that Christian missionaries have a right to visit all parts of the country...but Hindu preachers are not permitted to go to Mizoram because it is a Christian state.³²

The ire of the VHP has thus been directed against these two minority communities and the left-secular political parties that form the political opposition to the BJP. The accusations coming from the Sangh Parivar of 'appeasement of minorities' are widely known. This 'appeasement' tag for minority communities is needed by the Sangh Parivar to build a common enemy for the goal of Hindu unity and Hindu *rashtra*. Thus, the Christians and Muslims are perpetually portrayed as villains, whether as anti-national or terrorists, against whom a war of 'liberation' has to be waged.

An article in the VHP fortnightly, *Hindu Chetna*, described the state of Arunachal in the 'tight grip' of Christians/Christian missionaries, who are said to be luring tribals towards Christianity through money.³³ There are also calls to the Hindu society to 'become alert and be on its guard as it is under

attack on all fronts'.³⁴ It is said that these attacks are coming on an everyday basis from the Muslims, who are trying to destroy the Hindu society. For instance, the VHP publication states that socially, by befriending women and religiously by constructing *dargahs* everywhere, the Muslims are busy building their attacks on each front, even guns are being imported for this cause.³⁵ Comparisons are repeatedly drawn between the Hindus and Muslims and it is said that Muslims got full citizenship rights as well as special rights in India which were not even given to the majority Hindu society.³⁶ These descriptions are used to build and convey an imagery of Hindu unfreedom and victimization and linked to the above mentioned rhetoric of 'politics of appeasement of minorities' and 'politics of vote banks'. It is said that the country got political freedom but not religious freedom and that '*dharma nirpekshata*' is actually a shield to hide vote bank politics which is based on a policy of appeasement of minorities.³⁷

An announcement of a march to Ayodhya by the Babri Masjid Action Committee³⁸ was considered as a 'direct attack' on the sacred place of the Hindu society by the Marg Darshak Mandal of the VHP. They warned the 'Muslims that if they do not stop attacking the revered spots of the Hindus, their peaceful coexistence with the Hindus in Hindusthan would not be possible'.³⁹ It was announced by the Mandal that the Hindu society would oppose these actions and will stall their designs.⁴⁰

The second and in fact equally important part of this ideological and frenzied build-up is the invocation to the Hindus to liberate themselves, to free themselves – a refrain which continues from the colonial era and takes one back to Golwalkar. This liberation, it is said, can be achieved through unity, collective struggle, collective defence and collective worship. And, forces like Christianization can be resisted 'through violence if necessary'.⁴¹ It is said that if 'there is no tit for tat response on each front, the tendency to keep attacking the Hindus would not stop'.⁴² The Marg Darshak Mandal in one of its resolutions called upon the Hindus to organise programmes throughout the country to strengthen the struggle of the liberation of their places of worship.⁴³ The emphasis is on community organisation and collective action as means of resistance to a cultural attack. The demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya in 1992 was a moment of triumph for the Sangh Parivar and especially the VHP. It displayed that the community could 'come together' and collective action could bring about success. For the VHP, the demolition was a 'second independence' (see Katju 2003: 100).

Symbol of Slavery

The following question keeps coming up in VHP literature: Why is our country called India? – 'the name is a symbol of slavery'. It is said that this

was done to stall the rise of self-respect in a Hindu.⁴⁴ The motive was to break the respect for self completely. Even today this attack continues, the same article says. It is also said that unfortunately, the British policy of divide and rule continues even today.⁴⁵ To continue in power issues of caste, sect, language, region etc., are being raked up. This has greatly hurt the cause of national unity.⁴⁶ Echoing Golwalkar, this particular booklet, which was given to me by a Bajrang Dal activist while doing interviews with Sangh Parivar members, goes on to say that...

after independence the Muslim society, Christian society, pseudo-secularists and communists have made it their goal to attack Hindu society.⁴⁷ That Hindutva is 'threatening for the country, Hindutva will lead to the break-up of the country, Hindutva means oppression of Dalits. This kind of propaganda was spread...This has damaged the unity of the country'.⁴⁸

The booklet goes on to say, 'It is a historic truth that Hindu consciousness and Hindu unity are the only solution to this crisis. One has to work towards abandoning caste bitterness and feelings of high and low. One also has to make efforts to understand the conspiracy of selfish politicians, pseudo-secularists, Muslims and Christians and work for unity and awareness in Hindu society'.⁴⁹ It is interesting that these overtures come at the time of greater assertiveness in the backward and oppressed communities including Muslims and women. Efforts to organise them are seen as attempts at division of Hindu society and conspiracies to keep it enslaved.

The imagery of a community forced into slavery is something writ large in the VHP publications. Thus in this situation of a cultural 'slavery', it takes upon itself to free Hindus.

It is also said that,

Today all that is happening in the country which did not even happen during the days of slavery (colonial rule). What we did not lose during the days of slavery we have lost in the era of freedom. We are increasingly coming under the grip of western culture. No political leader is thinking about this....⁵⁰

This talk of cultural bondage pervades the ideological thinking within the Sangh Parivar. Time and again it is said that political independence came but with cultural slavery. Hindutva campaigns are built around the understanding that Hindus continue to lack freedom in their own independent country. The Congress governments are criticised for what is considered as branding the Hindus communal for following their religious ideals. This is seen to be breaking the Hindu community's confidence in a situation of onslaughts that it faces, but is something which is deliberately done by the secular forces to keep it under bondage. On the other hand, the

minority communities are seen as laying a siege against the Hindus and being encouraged by the Congress governments for doing so. In the words of a VHP member, 'The Congress talks about secularism but appeases Islam and Christian missionaries and criticises Hindutva. If a Hindu says Shri Ram, it is considered communal, then what should one call the government's encouragement to Muslims and Christian missionaries'.⁵¹

Hindus as Victims

The moment for Hindu triumph for the VHP came again with the landslide victory of BJP under Narendra Modi in the 2002 elections in Gujarat after the Gujarat carnage. Such political victories would pave the way for Hindu 'freedom' for the VHP. However, to VHP's chagrin the BJP backtracked and betrayed its own people. The BJP's compliance with the Supreme Court order not allowing any religious activity at the disputed site in Ayodhya in March 2002 upset the VHP tremendously. It made the VHP project the Hindus as a besieged community once again and this time at the hands of its associate, the BJP. Former Prime Minister Vajpayee was projected as a 'dictator' and one who 'hurt Hindu sentiments'⁵² because of 'the way he stopped the devotees from participating in the peaceful ceremony we (VHP) began last month (February 2002). Can he ever stop the Muslims from going to Mecca?'⁵³ The VHP public expression of anger against Vajpayee and the ruling NDA saw it in its characteristic form of spewing venom in its speeches and statements but this time directed against its own Parivar member. About the NDA it was said that it has 'never taken precautions against terrorism' the manner in which it has been 'guarding' the 'temple town' (from the cadres mobilised by the VHP).⁵⁴ It goes without saying that the growth of Muslim fundamentalism in certain regions of the world has come in handy for the Sangh Parivar. The Hindu society is seen by the VHP as 'a victim' of 'jehadi intolerance'.⁵⁵ When its temple construction plans were prevented by the U.P. government (led by Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party) once again in October 2003 and the Vajpayee government did not prevent the state government from acting against VHP volunteers, the VHP was again upset. This made the VHP leadership accuse the former Prime Minister of being 'anti-Hindu'.⁵⁶

Similar opinions of Hindu bondage and victimhood are expressed by the VHP even today. The Babri mosque is described as *gulami ka prateek* which came down as a result of the struggle of lakhs of Ram *bhakts*.⁵⁷ An article called *Gulami ke kalank mitane ke liye kiye gaye karya* lists out what was done since 1950s to wipe out the signs of colonial bondage.⁵⁸ The list among others includes the restoration of the Somnath temple in 1950, the naming of Minto Bridge in Delhi as Shivaji *pul* and the renaming of Calcutta, Bombay and

Madras as Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai. The article goes on to say that removal of the mosque-like structure (*masjid jaise dikhane wala dhancha*) from Sriramjanmabhoomi and the movement to rebuild the Ram temple there is a part of the same series of acts to wipe out 'signs of slavery'.⁹⁹

Conclusion

The idea of freedom gets articulated in the Hindutva discourse inversely. Through VHP's opinion on bondage, slavery, cultural attack etc., one gets to know what the idea of freedom means for the Sangh Parivar and how it builds a case for freedom and national regeneration of the Hindus. Though it seems obvious, one cannot help mentioning that this struggle for Hindu freedom is not for a life of better material existence or an end to oppressive material conditions nor does it present a plan for ending social hierarchies. On the contrary, it seeks freedom from an imaginary and ideologically driven notion of religious oppression. A conception of an individual as expressing oneself and being on the path of emancipation is also absent here. There is not merely a denial but a complete negation of an individual consciousness which seeks fulfilment through reflected action.

This idea of freedom with which the VHP works is more about access to and influence upon political power than about the actual ideals of freedom. In all its forms, whether shrill or moderate, it does not have much to offer on the ideas of human emancipation. Not only does it subsume individual emancipation to collective will, it also goes against the universal recognition of group rights. There is a conspicuous absence of a conception of social freedoms against hierarchal oppressions. What are recognised as legitimate and central are the rights of Hindus as a majority community having a socio-political sanctity. The idea of individual liberties and freedoms is clearly absent. Also, the cultural rights of minorities are unacknowledged and unrecognized. In fact, they are subsumed within Hindu majoritarianism to an extent that they become meaningless. The Sangh Parivar puts forth the ideology of Hindutva, as a national ideal. Its conception of freedom stands far removed from 'freedom' as is classically understood in any of the traditions of political theory. For the Sangh Parivar, it is Hindu national regeneration which forms freedom of a collective Hindu people. Coercion and authoritarianism become fundamental parts of this national ideal. This idea of freedom is articulated mainly as religio-cultural freedom of the Hindu community to pursue its collective will, which itself is defined by the RSS. I would argue that the VHP deploys the idea of 'unfreedom' to make implicit links with the now hegemonic ideas of freedom to actually protect the privileges of caste, class and patriarchy. In that sense, the VHP's use of ideas of freedom, in whatever roundabout manner it does, is actually an attempt to

build a Trojan horse to weaken and divide the substantial movements for freedom which have emerged in contemporary India. While this calls for alertness among those who are struggling for broadening freedoms in India today, it is also a symptom of how the terms of the discourse have changed in the last six decades of independence, when the most reactionary of political organisations need to cloak themselves with notions and ideas that are emancipatory and have wide acceptability, but go against the ideological underpinnings of sectarian ideologies.

What is also striking is that the notion of Hindu freedom does not have within it what one can call a 'virtuous' content. It does not ask of a Hindu to lead an existence which encourages small freedoms or liberties of everyday life that broadens the arena of a contented existence. In contrast, it asks of a Hindu to snatch back his 'rights', by organising as a political collective and taking recourse to violence and coercion if necessary.

This notion of freedom in Hindutva thus has to be read with militant and majoritarian ideas of Hindu resurgence as articulated by the Sangh Parivar. An idea that does not directly decry freedom but holds it as an exclusive domain of the Hindu community and is considered substantiated only with the political ascendancy of Hindu nationhood. The ideals of cultural pluralism and secularism stand in the way of this understanding of freedom.

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Notes

- 1 A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the conference, 'Indian Ideas of Freedom', organised by the Department of Political Science, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 21-23 February 2008.
- 2 See Sarkar's (2001) discussion of the formation and expansion of several 'publics' during the anti-colonial struggle in India which came to constitute key pressures for democracy (p28).
- 3 For a detailed analysis of Savarkar's ideas also see Bhatt (2001) and Sharma (2003).
- 4 For details see Bhatt (2001).
- 5 For a detailed discussion see Kanungo (2003: 51-4).
- 6 This text bearing Golwalkar's name as its author was actually written by G.D. Savarkar, also known as Babarao Savarkar, elder brother of V.D. Savarkar. He was an RSS member and helped RSS expansion in western Maharashtra

(Andersen and Damle 1987: 38). However, since the text carries the name of Golwalkar as its author it is taken here as authored by him. Also, this exchange of names shows the affinity between Golwalkar and Babarao on Hindu nationhood.

- 7 Golwalkar in a speech delivered at the Assam Vishva Hindu Parishad Conference held at Gauhati 2 October 1966 (reproduced in the World Hindu Conference commemorative volume 1979, p15).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p16.

11 Ibid.

12 For details see Kätju (2003).

13 *Shraddhanjali Smarika*, 1987, VHP publication, p22.

14 For details see Katju (2003).

15 World Hindu Conference vol. 1979, VHP publication, pviii.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ashok Singhal, 'The Struggle for Liberation of Sri Ram-Janmabhoomi', *Hindu Vishva*, silver jubilee issue, 1990, p56, English edition.

20 'The Promise for a New Century', *Hindu Vishva*, silver jubilee issue, 1990, p7, English edition.

21 Ibid., 6.

22 'Messages', *Hindu Vishva*, silver jubilee issue, 1990, 4, English edition. Interestingly, the two-nation theory is seen as completely a contribution of the All India Muslim League, and, by extension, of the Muslims. The role of the Hindutva ideologues in this, notably Savarkar, is ignored.

23 M.P. Degvekar, 'The Origin and Growth of Vishva Hindu Parishad', *Hindu Vishva*, silver jubilee issue, 1990, p10, English edition.

24 Ibid.

25 'Messages', Dalmia, op.cit.

26 'Uthho! Jago!' (Get up! Wake Up), Vishva Hindu Parishad north Uttar Pradesh, pamphlet n.d.

27 Ibid.

28 Anand Shankar Pandya, 'Educating the Hindus', *Hindu Vishva*, silver jubilee issue, 1990, 106, English edition.

29 'Tritya Dharma Sansad Adhiveshan', *Hindu Vishva*, March-April 1989, p10.

- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 *Hindu Chetna* May 1989, p17.
- 34 *Hindu Chetna* May 1989, p21.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Purshottam Singh Jog, 'Ram Janmabhoomi and Hindu-Muslim amity', *Hindu Vishva* May 1989, p18.
- 37 Sant Ramsharan das ji maharaj, 'Hinduisation of politics through a 25 crore Hindu vote-bank', *Hindu Vishva*, May 1989, p21.
- 38 The All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) was formed by a section of Muslims after locks at the Babri mosque site were opened to Hindu worship in 1986 by the Rajiv Gandhi government at the centre. Its primary aim was to counter the VHP propaganda that the Babri mosque was a disputed structure and not a proper mosque. In its work it is pitted directly against the politics of the Sangh Parivar.
- 39 *Hindu Chetna* August 1988, p16.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 *Hindu Chetna* May 1989, p17.
- 42 *Hindu Chetna* May 1989, p21.
- 43 *Hindu Chetna* August 1988, p17.
- 44 *Hindu Chetna* 15th August 1993, 30-33.
- 45 Utho! Chunauti Swikarain, Lok Jagran Abhiyan, Uttar Pradesh (Hindu Chetna Samiti, Lucknow), 1995, p6.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Yugpurush Swami Parmanand in *Hindu Chetna* 1-15th November 1995, p20.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ranjit Bhushan, Priya Sahgal and Davinder Kumar, 'Soliloquy Vs Chorus' – (interview with the late Ramchandra Paramhans, chief trustee of the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas), *Outlook*, 25th March 2002, p43.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 'VHP won't allow BJP to budge from Hindutva' – (interview with Praveen

Togadia, international general secretary of the VHP), *The Hindu* (Hyderabad), 26th December 2002.

- 56 Neena Vyas, 'Release 'Ram bhakts', Venkaiah urges CM', *The Hindu* (Hyderabad), 17th October 2003.
- 57 'Sriram janmabhoomi Ayodhya ko samjhain', *Hindu Chetna*, 1-15th August 2010, p5.
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Political Economy of Farm Price Fixation

A Historical Sketch

M. Raghavan

Introduction

As agriculture is the mainstay of an overwhelming majority of the population and agricultural price policy, the most important insurance against the vagaries of the market, a powerful view exists in some quarters that the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), which recommends the price policy for agricultural commodities, should be made a statutory body to see that its recommendations are not distorted at the implementation level. The latest in this regard is the report of an Expert Committee appointed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture under the chairmanship of Y.K. Alagh that recommended *inter alia* to (i) accord statutory status to the CACP; (ii) widen the terms of reference of CACP for enabling it to advise the tariff structure and the import-export policy for agricultural commodities; and (iii) entrust the CACP to revise upward the tariff rates on edible oils and cotton beyond the WTO bound rates. It was reported that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), which considered the report, decided not to accept these recommendations¹.

Given the manner in which the agricultural price policy works, the CCEA decision could not have been otherwise. The CACP is a recommendatory body. If it is accorded statutory power, the price policy recommendations that it gives, including those on trade and tariff policy, would become binding on the government, leaving other administrative wings dealing in some of these crucial areas of economic decision-making infructuous. As Ashok Mitra, who was once a chairman of the CACP pointed out on more than one occasion, agricultural price policy is an exercise in reconciling a *mélange* of conflicting and hard to reconcile objectives; the CACP alone cannot achieve these objectives, which have to be determined in parts by fiscal, monetary and trade policies (Mitra, 1968; 1977). Even if the CACP focuses only on arriving at a suitable level of minimum support price (MSP), keeping other factors as its determinants, wishing that such recommendations should be accepted as such by the government is to ignore the political economy of agricultural price fixation.

This will be clear if we have some idea about the process of

formulating and implementing the agricultural price policy on the one hand and the changes that have taken place in this process over time. After this introduction, Section II brings out, by drawing a few examples from various CACP reports since its inception in 1965 to the present period, as to how the CACP endeavours to reconcile competing interests of the contending economic classes while formulating the price policy recommendations and how, over time, this has undergone changes. Section III illustrates the manner in which these recommendations are implemented by the government and Section IV puts together the threads of the arguments in the preceding two sections for a conclusion. The CACP submits to the government five reports in a year, covering price policy for as many as 24 crops. The focus of analysis in this note will be on wheat and paddy, as available in its Khariff and Rabi reports.

II

Price Policy: CACP's Theoretical Perception

The task of the CACP to reconcile competing interests of different classes of people is drawn from the terms of reference given by the government that call for evolving "a balanced and integrated price structure in the perspective of the overall needs of the economy and with due regard to the interest of the producer and the consumer"². This is not by any means an easy task. For example, suppose the recommended MSP tends to tilt the balance even slightly in favour of the surplus raising farmers, for whatever reasons. There will be *ceteris paribus* a chain reaction. The relative increase in the MSP pushes up the market prices of foodgrains, adversely affecting the interests of the peasant farmers and the urban consumers. Foodgrains being wage-goods, any increase in their prices would push up the industrial costs. Similarly, if MSPs for cotton, sugarcane, jute and oilseeds are also raised, these would push up raw material costs of the relevant industries. If the industry decides to protect its profits and passes on the increased costs to the consumers, the repercussion *ceteris paribus* is a demand recession in the sector. On the other hand, if the industry absorbs the increased costs to avoid a recession, then, there is a squeeze on its profit margin, which would affect its long-term growth. Suppose the government decides to prevent an industrial recession (as also to protect the profit margin of the private industrial capitalists) and absorbs the enhanced MSP through a subsidy in the issue price, then, the fiscal system suffers, impeding public investments in infrastructures like irrigation and in social sectors like primary healthcare and education.

Just as a relative step-up in the MSP, a relative downward adjustment in it also creates the same chain-reaction though its epicentre now shifts from

industry to agriculture. That is, lower the MSP, lower the profitability in agriculture and lower the productivity raising private investments in land and capital. The consequent long-term stagnation in farm outputs (both wage goods and agro-based industrial raw materials) and the resultant rise in their market prices would *ceteris paribus* lead to the same macroeconomic chain-reaction as brought out above. That is why the terms of reference to the CACP stipulate that the price policy recommendations should carefully 'balance' the interests of both the producer and the consumer. In an economy characterised by the existence of acute inequality in income and asset distribution, this task is much more complicated than would appear on the first sight.

In its initial years, the CACP took the position that, this task, though arduous, is not unduly insurmountable. Accordingly, it designed two sets of farm prices, namely, the MSP, to be operational when farm-gate prices crash below the stipulated minimum and a procurement price (PP), to be functional when farm-gate prices rise above the level of the MSP that the government declared for the season. If the MSP is in operation, according to the CACP schedule, the public agencies should accept any quantity that farmers willingly offer and, if PP is in operation, only that quantity which the government needs to run the PDS and create buffer stocks has to be procured. Once that quantity is obtained, according to the perceptions of the CACP, the public agencies should stop purchases and leave the rest of the market arrivals for private operators to deal with. The CACP's contention was that, if carefully formulated and implemented, these two sets of administered prices and the accompanying system of procurement, storage and distribution would fulfil the objectives set out in the terms of reference.

Nevertheless, reports on price policy for various agricultural commodities would show that the CACP itself could not stick to this theoretically sound and logically coherent schedule. It recommended MSP and PP for the crops covered under the terms of reference during 1965-71 seasons, either MSP or PP during 1971-91 and only MSP since 1991-92. These reports would also suggest that the considerations that the CACP found relevant in arriving at the administered agricultural prices at one point of time were not found relevant by it at another point of time. For, in a dynamic economy, if the weights that it attaches to various factors taken for determining the level of farm prices undergo any change, then, along with this change, the importance attached to those considerations have also to be changed (Narain, 1975). However, there are occasions when CACP recommendations appeared logically inconsistent with the terms of reference, as well as with its own theoretically coherent and widely appreciated price policy schedule. The following cases would clarify the

point:

First, keeping away from the two decades of its own practice of recommending a single producer-price for paddy, either state-wise or for the country, the CACP started giving, since the second half of the eighties, three different MSPs for paddy categorising it as 'common', 'fine' and 'superfine' varieties. The latter two varieties were afterwards clubbed together as 'Grade-A' and provided a relatively higher MSP than for 'common' paddy. Analysts had pointed out that this was a deliberate attempt to favour mainly the farmers growing PR-106 variety of paddy in the advanced wheat-growing areas. The central issue price fixed for 'Grade-A' rice becomes naturally higher than that for 'common' rice. Therefore, some of the consuming states are reportedly not taking delivery of the 'Grade-A' rice from the central stocks as their poor ration-card holders are unable to pay the high PDS issue price. There were reports that most of the unsold stocks of rice accumulating with the FCI belonged to PR-106 variety.

Secondly, in the early 1990s, the CACP eloquently argued for downsizing the PDS by limiting it to the 'below poverty line (BPL) population, long before Government of India had to do so at the insistence of the World Bank. In the Kharif Report for 1991-92 season, thus, the CACP recommended that the "government should reduce its commitment of foodgrains distribution in a systematic manner and.....only a limited proportion of the population, which is really poor, should remain covered by the public distribution system". Along with this, it also recommended that "now onwards even in the case of cereals, only the MSP be announced". Again, in the 1992-93 Rabi Report, the CACP repeated this as a major recommendation³, without clarifying why the government should undertake unlimited support purchases and distribute only a limited quantity out of it through the PDS.

Thirdly, the High Level Committee on Long Term Grain Policy, headed by Abhijit Sen, a former chairman of CACP, in its report submitted in May 2001, had recommended that the government should fix only one MSP for paddy (as against declaring two MSPs separately for 'common' and 'Grade-A' varieties). It is a well-known fact that, unlike wheat, there are several paddy varieties in different states, with distinct consumer preferences and prices. The FCI used to derive from a single MSP declared by the government, variety-wise support prices for states based on the hulling/milling ratios as well as the processing and incidental charges for separate varieties of paddy. Perceptibly, the objective of the Sen Committee recommendation was to go back to this reasonably more ideal practice. However, the CACP ignored the high level committee's recommendation for more than five years. Then, in the 2007-08 Kharif Report, it not only opposed this recommendation but also advised one more MSP for a third variety of paddy, namely, '*basmati*', in

addition to the two MSPs for 'common' and 'Grade-A' varieties.

Bringing 'basmati' within the MSP regime is untenable for the following reasons: One, 'basmati rice' is traded in the national commodity derivative exchanges, where, according to its proponents, the so called 'price discovery' takes place at a level much above the MSP so that the question of extending price support to this variety does not arise. Two, 'basmati rice' is traditionally an exportable variety that fetches excellent margin of profits in the international market. Already there are established exporters in the private sector with better knowledge about the overseas market for basmati. Three, while deriving the MSP for basmati, if its prices in the overseas market and in commodity futures market are considered as additional determinants, its level would become so high that the grain cannot be issued to PDS-dependent ration card holders, nor for other poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes, or for market price stabilisation through open market sales.

III

Price Policy and Political Compulsions

Regarding the MSP/PP schedule originally postulated by the CACP, the government seemed to have agreed with it but, in practice, strayed out and declared its own prices. Interestingly, on such occasions, the underlying arguments that the CACP offered to recommend a given MSP/PP and that the government gave out to disagree with it were quite often basically the same. A perusal of various CACP reports would show that this has been a recurring practice since the mid-sixties. In what follows, a few prominent episodes are culled out from these reports for illustration.

Just before the launching of the CACP in 1965, a Foodgrains Policy Committee had already set in motion the criteria for arriving at the MSP (christened then as '*minimum purchase price*') of cereals for the year 1964-65, projecting the averages of their highest and lowest wholesale prices in the secondary market during the preceding three years. In its first Kharif Report for 1965-66 season, the CACP disagreed with the methodology of fixing producer-prices in the primary market with reference to the trends in ruling secondary market prices, especially in an inflationary situation like then that was sparked off by severe shortages due to an unprecedented drought. The CACP's argument was that such a methodology would escalate the open market grain prices and act against the interest of the consuming public, including the majority of small farmers who depend on the market for a sizable part of their staples. With this perception, the CACP recommended that the *minimum purchase prices* fixed for the preceding season, which were still very high, be continued for 1965-66 season.

Contrary to this recommendation, the government raised the *minimum purchase prices* of cereals not only for 1965-66 but also for 1966-67 marketing seasons. Later, the 'compulsions' under which the government had to take this decision was given out as follows: One, the steep decline in the domestic availability of foodgrains during this period could be restored only partially through imports, which itself in those two years were the highest until then. Two, the stoppage of the US aid following the 1965 Indo-Pak war, and the devaluation of rupee in June 1966, had imposed stresses on foreign exchange resources as also a substantial increase in the food subsidy bill. Given these circumstances, maintenance of the PDS required accessing some stocks from the depleted domestic production of foodgrains. The producers would willingly surrender their stocks for public procurement only if prices offered were sufficiently attractive⁴.

The second notable violation of CACP recommendations by the government occurred in 1968-69, when the 'green revolution' led to pervasive crashes in prices of wheat in major producing centres. The government, which had lent conscious backups to this spurt in production, made elaborate arrangements and undertook 'support purchases' of almost the entire market arrivals of wheat, not at the MSP but at a substantially higher PP. The justification for this, though contrary to the CACP's theoretical perception, was not difficult to understand. The Indian agriculture, with the prevalence of a very high pre-capitalist ground rent that constituted a formidable barrier to capitalist development (U.Patnaik 1983), was until then carried along traditional lines. The government did not want some of the wheat regions, which could break this barrier and help largely to solve the food problem of the country, to retreat from the new line of cultivation.

Thus, if the 'compulsion' for the government in the shortage-years for fixing relatively higher PP was to attract some stocks for the PDS from domestic production, the 'compulsion' during the green revolution years for fixing relatively higher PP, treating it as MSP and, then, accepting whatever quantity the producers offered was to prevent primary market prices from falling to uneconomic levels and discouraging farmers to take up yield raising investments in agriculture. However, the practice of treating PP as MSP, which the government continued, had serious repercussions:

(a) These led to the accumulation of grain stocks and attendant fiscal problems. The stocks so piled up could not be used even during years like 1972-74 when a widespread drought and an unprecedented global oil shock led to hyper-inflation in the country. Had the government distributed the excess stocks through PDS, the subsidy bill could go up; had it retained the stocks with itself, the carrying costs would escalate. These stocks were

therefore released in the open market, expecting to bring down the general level of prices as well as the fiscal cost of stockholding. The stocks, of course, came down but not prices. While commenting on this episode in a different context, Joan Robinson had noted that this failed to have the desired result, as private dealers bought up the grain released by the government in the open market and sold later at handsome profits when the expected spurts in prices occurred (Robinson, 1974).

(b) The surplus farmers of advanced agricultural regions who were the main beneficiaries of the hikes in administered agricultural prices became politically powerful and resisted any attempt to moderate the profitability being built into these prices. That was not in any case the end of it. The powerful farm lobby, with its Oliver Twist syndrome, would go on asking for more and the government went on raising the farm prices. Any thing that happened in the economy, or elsewhere, even if it is not remotely associated with cultivation, was used by the farm lobby to substantiate the demand for higher and higher MSP (Krishnaji, 1990).

(c) Maintaining the relatively high profit margins in procurement prices and buying whatever quantity that the farmers offered involved extra fiscal costs. To meet this, the government had to effect changes in monetary and fiscal policies, leading to a 'squeeze' on farm labourers, industrial workers and salaried employees, who had to bear the brunt of the rising costs of state intervention in the market for agricultural commodities that required enhanced taxes and unacceptably large deficit financing. The ire of the affected people came out on occasions in the form of collective actions, the most notable examples being the historic railway employees' strike and the massive Jayaprakash Narayan movement in the seventies.

Winning back the confidence of these sections was a political compulsion of that period and, thus, the government used the farm price policy in an entirely different way this time. A perusal of the producers' prices fixed for major cereals during the seventies would show that, in nominal terms, these prices were kept unchanged for a few years and even stepped up occasionally. Along with this, however, a part of the oil-shock-induced rise in fertiliser import prices was passed on to the cultivators by stepping up the pool issue prices of urea, muriate of potash and diammonium phosphate. This was instrumental in a reversal of the terms of trade for agriculture that were clearly in its favour until then. Simultaneously, using the fear psychosis of the internal Emergency, the government retrieved a part of the black money and illicit hoardings of foreign exchange, and achieved better tax compliance of the rich. With the accompanying revenue buoyancy, the government could redress to an extent the growing discontent and alienation of the urban middle class. The fairly extensive literature on this episode

would reveal that the changes effected in the economic policy during the internal Emergency were intended primarily to ease the economic burden of the urban middle class (Chakravarty 1979) as also to reverse the large shifts in terms of trade for agriculture, engineered by the farm lobby through the price policy (P. Patnaik 1995). The 'squeeze' on the farm sector, which began since the latter half of the seventies continued in the eighties. Nonetheless, its impact was not uniform across holdings. The fact that input subsidies and a large increase in public foodgrain stocks also continued during this period implied that at least a section of the farmers, mainly the larger among them, have not suffered from this 'squeeze' (Rao and Storm, 1998).

The 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium saw dramatic changes in the farm price policy, to the extent of disfiguring its earlier self. This has not taken place because of widening differences between the theoretical perceptions of the CACP and the political or administrative compulsions of the government but on an apparent convergence of the two. Thus, in the early nineties, when the CACP recommended that henceforth only MSPs be announced (and not both the MSP and the PP), the government readily accepted the recommendation and announced MSPs for various crops on the eve of the sowing season. On the harvest eve, however, these were selectively augmented with a bonus so that, in effect, the PP came back through the backdoor. Occasionally, it would jack up the MSP itself from what the CACP recommended. The impacts of these were significant on three counts: (i) the CACP discarded its own theoretical framework for determining the administered agricultural prices and the logically coherent methodology that it had chiselled over time to arrive at these prices; (ii) while arriving at the MSP, it mixed up the factors that it considered relevant in the determination of PP also, without explaining why; and (iii) the MSP plus bonus fixed by the government for one season became the basis for the CACP to consider the MSP for the next season, inviting derisive remarks from critics as 'the government has become the price-leader and the commission, its dutiful follower'.

The third major episode relates to the compulsions of the post-Uruguay Round implementation of the WTO rules under the Agreement on Agriculture. The logical necessity of these rules called for opening up of the grain market not only for imports from abroad but also for domestic and international corporate houses to procure and sell at their terms. For this, the government diluted, if not totally withdrew, from market intervention programmes. This was however done rather adroitly, as it is politically suicidal to estrange the big farmers whose interest it has been safeguarding all along through the price policy. A perusal of the CACP reports from the 1990s would show how the government could achieve this.

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(a) The stepping up of MSPs by the government through bonus payments continued, despite occasional objections from the CACP. As a result, irrespective of the size of the crop, the market arrivals surged, necessitating the FCI to accept larger and larger quantities of food grains offered in the primary market. Along with this, the FCI started gradually reducing its procurement centres, from a total of 1025 in 1995-96 to 773 in 2000-01 and completely withdrew from five of the 15 states from which it used to directly undertake support purchases, including the major producing states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh⁵.

(b) With the permission granted to FCI for withdrawing from a large number of procurement centres, the government also allowed domestic and foreign multinationals to enter the markets and procure foodgrains at less than the MSP fixed for the season, mainly from outside the registered *mandis*. That is why, apart from flour-mill owners, large corporate houses like Reliance, ITC, Cargill India, Continental etc., are now undertaking large scale procurement of foodgrains.

(c) In order to create operational space for the private trade under the new free market regime, it is also necessary for the government to weaken subsidised sale of foodgrains through PDS, which has been already downsized in the form of TPDS. To achieve this, the government adopted an ingenious method, viz, to steeply hike both BPL and APL issue prices. For example, in the late 1990s, when the FCI's economic cost of buffer stocking of wheat was Rs 169.52 per quintal, the central issue price for PDS was fixed at Rs 415 per quintal for BPL and at Rs 682 to Rs 900 per quintal for APL beneficiaries. At these rates, the BPL rate worked out to 145 per cent and APL rate, between 300 per cent and 430 per cent above the estimated economic cost. While observing this, Ashok Mitra had pointed out that, by the close of the last millennium, there was a paradoxical situation in the foodgrain market: i.e., accumulation of a "stock of 40 million tonnes, the storage cost of maintaining these stocks is at least Rs 5,000 crore per annum, while the off take from the public distribution system is hardly 10 to 15 per cent of the total stocks" (Mitra 2000). Of late, it is reportedly hobnobbing further with the idea of replacing TPDS with a food coupon system to arbitrarily selected BPL households and leaving the entire foodgrains to the private traders in the open market⁶.

The fourth episode in which the government strayed out from CACP recommended MSPs could be characterised as arising from the 'compulsions' of the coalition politics, the survival of which depends, crucially on the pleasures of certain smaller regional political parties. Some of these parties are known to represent the interest of their local big farmers. Their support for the Central government required continued increases in

the MSPs and support purchases of all quantities that surplus raising rich farmers offered for sale in the primary market. This necessitated further strengthening (and widening) of the MSP-net but without a corresponding expansion of the PDS, thus, intensifying the imbalance between procurement and disposal of foodgrains.

Lastly, the most recent example of the deviation by government from the MSP-based farm price policy was due to the 'compulsion' from the votaries of global finance capital to make available the national commodity derivative exchanges for futures trading in agricultural commodities, including foodgrains. With the entry of foreign institutional investors in the Indian capital and commodity markets since the economic liberalisation began in 1991, there was mounting pressures on the government to permit agricultural commodities, including essential food items, which were until then outside the purview of futures market, to be traded online through commodity exchanges. Its advocates within and outside the government argued that (i) futures trading enables farmers to achieve better 'price discovery' for their produce than that is offered by the MSP; (ii) commodity derivative market, unlike the present system of farm price policy, will reduce the price volatility, which is a perennial problem that Indian farmers face; and (iii) its price risk mitigation capacity is well-known all over the world where commodity markets are operating.

Attracted by these persuasive arguments, the National Agricultural Policy, presented in Parliament in 2000, declared that the government would enlarge the futures market for agricultural commodities. Thus, by 2003, all agricultural commodities, which were outside derivative trade, including essential food items like wheat, rice, pulses, edible oils and sugar, were permitted for on-line trading in commodity exchanges. However, in spite of all major and minor agricultural commodities, both in their primary and processed forms, getting traded in the commodity futures market, the promised prosperity through a rate of return higher than assured by the MSP remained elusive to the peasantry. It is well known that the agricultural commodity derivative trading phase could not prevent the massive farmers' suicides being witnessed since the late 1990s.

Analysts have pointed out that the fabulous increase in the mark-up on agricultural prices registered in the commodity exchanges does not percolate to the cultivators as it is snatched away by a chain of intermediaries. At the same time, the consumer prices of essential food items in the spot market flared up. The Expert Committee appointed by Government of India to study the impact of futures trading on agricultural commodity prices showed that the annualized wheat price based WPI inflation was 9.8 percent during the 30 months between August 2004 and February 2007 when futures trading in

wheat became liquid. This was in sharp contrast with the wheat price inflation of 1.5 per cent during the previous 30 months or 0.3 per cent in the year subsequent to de-listing of wheat from commodity exchanges. The main body of the Expert Committee report, influenced by the majority opinion, stated that it is difficult to establish any causal relationship between futures trading and inflationary price rise of farm goods. However, a Supplementary Note by Prof. Abhijit Sen, the chairman of the Expert Committee, citing several research findings and supported by his own empirical analysis stated: "It is clearly illogical to claim that futures trading will generally tend to improve prices received by farmers and yet maintain that futures trading can never contribute to inflation of spot prices".

IV

Conclusion

Understandably, the repeated deviation from the CACP recommendations and the widely noted distortions in the implementation of farm price policy have prompted the Alagh Committee to advocate conversion of the CACP from its present recommendatory status to a statutory body. In this context, our brief historical sketch of the agricultural price policy, as was evolved from the mid-sixties through the present period, revealed the following:

First, in the initial years of its establishment, the CACP had pursued a theoretically coherent and implementation-wise not so difficult frame-work to formulate the levels of producers' prices, procurement, stock holding and distribution. Had the CACP stuck to this frame-work, while the government deviated from it, there was probably a case to argue for a statutory status to be given to the CACP, even ignoring other factors. Instead, the CACP has itself been deviating from its own otherwise widely appreciated methodology of price policy formulation. The intention for pointing out this is not that a policy model, designed some half a century ago, should be continued without any change even today. On the other hand, what is implied here is that whenever a well-knit price intervention methodology is altered, it is expected of the CACP to make out the reason for the same and to explain how its revised scheme is superior to the earlier one. Such clarifications rarely came out.

Secondly, reconciling the competing interests of various sections in the economy quite often compels the government to deviate from the CACP's theoretically coherent price policy formulations. We have noted in the foregoing that there were varying pressures from time-to-time due to which the government was compelled to reject CACP recommendations and determine its own seemingly irrational but politically unavoidable decisions.

Over the years, these compulsions included: (i) concern for maintenance of foodgrain output growth that it tried to achieve by encouraging the relatively large farmers to take up productivity raising investments through reinforcing larger profit margins than involved in CACP recommended MSPs; (ii) winning back the confidence of the rural and urban poor, who were estranged from the government due the adverse consequence of the pro-big-farmer-biased price policy decisions; (iii) imperative of continuing in political power that required satisfying the coalition partners, some of whom represented the interests of the large farmers.

Thirdly, assuming that the government is somehow able to reconcile the competing interests of various sections within the economy through the farm price policy, then, problems arise from the external sector. For example, (i) oil shocks recurring from time to time and its impact on the domestic fiscal system; (ii) withdrawal of customs duties as per provisions of the WTO rules that impose fiscal constraints and restrict the freedom to continue with the average-cost-plus-mark-up based output price support to the surplus farmers and subsidised supply of foodgrains to the consumers through a universal PDS; and (iv) safeguarding the interests of global finance capital by opening up commodity derivative exchanges for agricultural products, disregarding its adverse impact on domestic producers and consumers.

Evidently, repeated deviations from CACP recommendations under extra-economic compulsions from within and outside the economy have resulted in outrageous distortions of the farm price policy. The conversion of CACP as a statutory body, however, will not solve this problem. For, historically, the CACP was not consistent in its recommendations. Even if it becomes consistent in future, giving statutory powers to CACP will not only take away the political space for the government in decision-making but also make many other wings of the government infructuous.

Like the Alagh Committee, the National Committee on Farmers had recommended that 'the CACP should be an autonomous statutory organisation'. Similarly, the High Level Abhijit Sen Committee on Long Term Grain Policy, about which we mentioned earlier, had recommended two alternative proposals: (i) that the CACP be made a statutory body; and (ii) that "the MSP, set at floor price on the recommendations of the CACP, should have a statutory status". The second proposal, to us, is more appropriate for: (i) it does not take away the political space available to the government in decision-making; (ii) the distortions creeping into the implementation of the MSP can be minimised to a great extent when it is statutorily protected; and (iii) the statutory status goes to the MSP, not to the CACP, after the government takes its political decision. This is the practice presently followed for sugarcane in the form of *statutory minimum price*.

To conclude, it is a universally recognised fact that, in India, a committee or a commission is set up to have a convenient 'shoulder' for the ruling political class to shoot its own gun. The political class has been using the CACP – sometimes with its willingness and sometimes with protests – to shoot its class-biased farm price policy. If the CACP is converted into a statutory body, then, it is tantamount to permitting the use of the government's 'shoulder' to shoot the CACP's gun, a view neither appropriate nor feasible.

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Notes

1. Press Information Bureau of the Government of India dated 15 January 2009. Also see, *The Hindu Business Line*, January 16, 2009. According to the report, CCEA has accepted other recommendations of the committee which relate mostly to spruce up cost of cultivation data used for farm price fixation.
2. Government of India Resolution No. 6/65-C(E) dated 8 January 1965 on the Terms of Reference of the Agricultural Prices Commission (Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Food & Agriculture).
3. See, *Reports of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices on Price Policy for Crops Sown in 1991-92 and 1992-93 Seasons*.
4. See, *Economic Survey 1966-67*, (pp. 36-39).
5. See, *Report of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices for the Crops Sown during 2001-2002 Season*, (p.242).
6. See, Chapter 2 of the *Economic Survey 2009-10* for an "altered system" of food security, which finds reflection in the subsequent Budget Speech of the Finance Minister.
7. The National Commission on Farmers had also recommended that the MSP recommended by the CACP for an agricultural commodity should be at least 50 percent more than its weighted average cost of production and the net take home income of the farmer comparable to those of the civil servants. See, the Fifth and Final Report (Para 1.5.10.7), 4 October 2006.

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Gender and International Migration:

The Profile of Female Migrants from India

Rashmi Sharma

I. Introduction

Globalisation has accelerated the pace of international migration, unprecedentedly, during the last two decades. The number of international migrants has increased from 154 million to 175 million between 1990 and 2000 (United Nations, 2002), and to 195 million in 2005 (United Nations, 2009) and as per United Nations estimate it will be more than 213 million in 2010 (United Nations, 2009). At present the number of people living outside their own country of birth is larger than at any time in history. The consequences of international migration, for all: the country of origin, country of destination, the migrant and the host population; have increasingly attracted the attention of policymakers, academicians and international institutions. The phenomenon is likely to develop further in the coming decades as a part of the world globalisation process, which has led to, migration of an increasing number of people, either on short-term basis, as transnational citizens or as permanent migrants. Moreover, as a result of the ongoing recession which has affected almost all the countries world over, especially the developed countries, keeping eyes on migration trends and policies becomes even more crucial. Rising unemployment and lay-offs have adversely affected the immigrants, who have been made the scapegoat of this turmoil, with the destination countries enacting increasingly protectionist and discriminatory policies. Although this has been criticised by some of the academic and multilateral organisations, but the developed countries continue to enforce them, raising a question mark on the future of the present and potential immigrants from the developing countries. The concerns regarding the well-being and safety of the migrant become even more pronounced when the immigrants belong to a vulnerable category: women. Due to lack of educational qualifications, women are already exposed to exploitation in the migration process. Moreover, tightening of borders and curbing the legal channels increases irregular migration, subjecting women to the risk of exploitation and trafficking and prostitution. Hence, a serious effort is required to explore and unveil the female face of international migration from India to control and limit their exploitation in the migration cycle.

1.1. Trends in Migration of Women across Borders

One of the crucial features of international migration world over is the increasing presence of women among the migrants. Of the huge migrant population, nearly 50 percent – or 95 million – are women (UNFPA, 2006). Due to the contemporary economic and social changes in the past few decades, at present, there is now clear visibility and partnership of women in the global market. Migration statistics establish that over the last four decades the percentage of female migrants is approaching half of the total migrant stock worldwide (Table 1). According to 2010 estimate of international migrant stock by the UN, nearly 50 percent are women with minor variations across the continents (Table 2 and Figure 1).

Also, there is significant variability across countries. Women are the majority of migrants in countries as diverse as Nepal, Serbia, the Czech Republic and the ex-USSR nations, and one-third or less of the total migrant workers in the Middle Eastern oil exporting countries.

Table 1: Female Migrants Worldwide, 1960-2010

Year	Total Number of Migrants	Total number of Female Migrants	Percent of Female Migrants
1960	7,54,63,352	3,53,28,232	46.8
1965	7,84,43,933	3,69,18,332	47.1
1970	8,13,35,779	3,84,26,955	47.2
1975	8,67,89,304	4,11,04,314	47.4
1980	9,92,75,898	4,68,84,139	47.2
1985	11,10,13,230	5,23,64,718	47.2
1990	15,49,45,333	7,59,67,491	49.0
1995	16,50,80,235	8,13,96,614	49.3
2000	17,67,35,772	8,77,57,603	49.7
2005	19,06,33,564	9,45,18,611	49.6
2010	21,39,44,000	10,48,32,560	49.0

Sources: For 1960-2005, UN Population Division, Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision (cited in Martin 2007); for 2010, United Nations 2009.

Women were 49 percent of total global migrants in 2000 and their share was higher in the more developed nations as compared to the less developed nations. 51 percent in more developed and 45 percent in less developed. Among countries with at least 100,000 migrants in 2000, women were over 60 percent of migrants in Nepal, Serbia, and the Czech Republic, and one-third or less of migrants in Gulf-area nations in the Middle East and Bangladesh.

In Asia, the number of women migrating from some countries has surpassed that of males. In Philippines, nearly 65 percent of those who left

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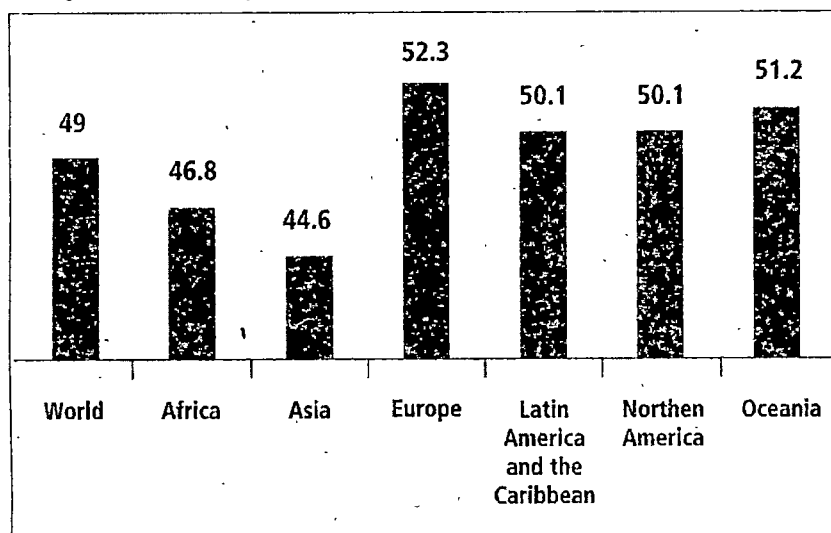
Rashmi Sharma

Table 2: Estimated International Female Migrant Stock, 2010

Continent	Total (Thousands)	Percentage of Total Population	Percentage Female Migrants
World	213944	3.1	49.0
Africa	19263	1.9	46.8
Asia	61324	1.5	44.6
Europe	69819	9.5	52.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	7480	1.3	50.1
Northern America	5042	14.2	50.1
Oceania	615	16.8	51.2

Source: IMR, 2009

Figure 1: Female Migrants as a percentage of Total Migrants, 2010 Estimate



Source: Based on Table 2.

the country for work were women. In Sri Lanka, there were two women for every male emigrant in 2002. Between 2000 and 2003, about 70 percent of those who left Indonesia to work abroad were women. Majority of female migrants like the majority of all migrants, are currently living in the developed countries particularly in Europe (29 million) and North America (20 million), outnumbering men among international migrants. In spite of the large numbers of female migrants, the subject of gender and migration has not received the deserved attention and policy implementation. At the release of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report titled *State of the World Population 2006* on women and international migration, its

Table 3: Female Migrant Stock: Ranked by Share of Total Migrants, 2000

	Migrant Stock		Female Share	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
World	154,005,049	174,933,815	48	49
More developed regions	81,424,718	104,104,560	51	51
Less developed regions	72,580,331	70,829,255	44	45
Least developed regions	10,992,041	10,458,106	46	47
Nepal	413,351	618,506	72	73
Serbia and Montenegro	132,000	626,000	51	62
Czech Republic	145,945	235,595	60	60
Lebanon	532,592	634,027	57	57
Italy	1,346,174	1,634,290	56	56
Israel	1,632,704	2,256,236	53	56
Croatia	483,193	425,000	54	55
Belarus	1,270,500	1,283,700	54	54
Bulgaria	21,510	101,000	54	54
Russian Federation	11,688,700	13,259,400	54	54
Republic of Moldova	578,500	474,400	54	54
Ukraine	7,097,100	6,947,115	54	54
Jordan	1,146,510	1,945,213	34	34
Saudi Arabia	4,220,456	5,254,816	30	34
Bahrain	173,200	254,306	28	34
Yemen	107,191	248,135	32	32
Iraq	83,638	146,910	33	31

Source: United Nations Population Division Report 2006 as cited in Martin (2005).

representative Ena Singh expressed concern over inadequate focus on the human rights of migrants, especially women migrants, who are often exploited and abused in the process of migration.

Detailed data reveal the rising movement of women as independent workers, unlike in the past, when women migrated mostly due to marriage or family reunification, a large number of them are now migrating for work. The significant presence of women in migration flows has been a concomitant of their economic contribution to the families and communities. This is reflected in the increasing percentages of women in migration flows to all world regions (Piper, 2003). Domestic work is the largest sector driving international women labour migration. Also, there is remarkable diversity in migration patterns among women and such diversity has increased along with recent economic and social changes in both the sending and the receiving countries. Migration patterns are highly gendered in terms of causes and consequences of movement. Marriage remains a major

cause of female migration, world over, nonetheless, there is a rising trend of female migration for work. However, there are segregated labour markets for male and female migrant workers. While males dominate in production and construction females are dominantly found in specific service activities like domestic work, the care industry and entertainment sector. Importantly, from the perspective of the sending country, women tend to remit a much larger share of their earnings as compared to men, hence the source countries have come to realise the benefits of female migration. A study conducted by a United Nations organisation in 2000 showed Bangladeshi women send home 72 percent of their earnings. These remittances have a significant role in poverty reduction and development (UNFPA, 2006).¹

2. Spectrum of Gender and Labour Market Integration: Outcomes for Female Migrants

Let us now consider the job profiles held by migrant women. It is imperative to understand the inter-linkages between the place of women within the labour market and the type of job they do, and the immigration policies and the mode of entry in the destination countries. A large number of problems faced by migrant women, regarding discrimination and exploitation at work, arise out of the nature of work they do.

Contemporary changes such as *inter alia* rising male unemployment, reduction in demand for male labour due to economic slowdowns of certain sectors and the shift in economic emphasis to the service industries in countries of origin as well as destination have placed mounting burden on women. On one hand, studies conducted in the context of Latin America and Europe have observed conspicuous decline in female inactivity as against growth in the inactivity of men in the domestic labour market (Farah et al., 2002). On the other hand, Asian societies have also witnessed rise in female participation. Besides, it is pivotal to fathom the fundamental demand and supply forces driving women's migration for work which are determined by dissecting the segregation of work sectors for men and women. Women dominate the care and entertainment sectors where demand is less dependent on the economic cycle, and more on long run demographic and social tendencies in the destination countries. Developed countries which are experiencing ageing and increasing female participation in high-income activities require more care and domestic workers (Ghosh, 2010) while the developing countries with a rising working-age population meets this need.

In most of the major immigrant destinations Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, women explicitly dominate the *family reunification* category among immigrants. Although family migration has broader effects on labour markets, these are merely recognised because

family migration is a naively researched area. The movement of women as a part of family migration changes the nature of social reproduction among migrants and creates new sources of labour that can enter formal and informal labour markets (Ghosh, 2010). But in reality women encounter difficulties in finding work commensurate with their qualifications while holding the status of a dependent spouse. Notwithstanding, world over women are increasingly migrating in search of jobs. In Europe, women predominate in migratory flows from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Philippines (Ghosh, 2010).

In Southeast and East Asian countries, admitting migrants exclusively for temporary labour purposes; the share of independent women in the labour migration flows has been increasing sharply since the late 1970s (ILO, 2003, p. 9), and in some cases women clearly dominate over their male counterparts. South Asia is mainly a labour exporting sub-region where female (official) mobility is subject to serious restrictions (with the notable exception of Sri Lanka). Hence, countries such as Bangladesh predominantly send male migrants. In Asia, Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka are major countries sending female migrants. In Philippines, women migrants have outnumbered the males since 1992 and in all the three countries women are between 60 to 80 percent of all legal migrants for work (Asis, 2003). Majority of them are in service sector, typically low paid domestic service, as caregivers or housemaids or in entertainment work. In other parts of Asia restrictions on legal female migration has led to an increase in illegal migration and trafficking of women as discussed later. Feminisation of labour migration seems least evident in Africa, although the proportion of female migrants is also increasing, but with sub-regional differentiations. Southern Africa has the lowest percentage of female migrants. It therefore depends not only on types of jobs and available mode of entry whether or not women make up substantial numbers in international migration streams, but also on socio-cultural factors. In addition, gender dimensions in the society at the source country are important determinants of the inception of female mobility. In patriarchal societies male migrants clearly dominate while matrifocal societies dominantly send female migrants. However, trends have slowly been changing even in patriarchal societies.

2.1. Low Skilled Jobs

There are also qualitative differences between native and migrant women at the destination. Most migrant women thus tend to be concentrated to a greater extent than their native peers in low-skilled personal service work. Globally, most women migrants generate income through jobs which are considered low-skilled, are poorly paid and often performed in the domestic

and/or private domain or related to the expansion of the service industry i.e., the 3-d (dirty, demeaning and dangerous) jobs. Generally such jobs tend to be looked down upon socially and devalued economically. Domestic and household work constitutes, together with nursing, the most female dominated sector. The most widespread problems with domestic work are the low pay and long working hours, the inferior positions of domestic workers and highly personalised relationships with employers, which make it arduous for workers to receive their agreed pay or get time off. The health and safety situation for the domestic workers, at home is seldom satisfactory, and if they are ill they do not get paid and also run the risk of losing their jobs. Psychological, physical and sexual abuses are very common. We can clearly observe the nexus between sexism and racism as these areas are not preferred by the native women because of the social stigma attached to this area.

Globally, it has been observed that most women who migrate in the low-skill category are: domestic or care workers, so-called entertainers, in manufacturing (especially garments) and to a lesser degree in agriculture. Within manufacturing, male migrants are often part of higher management levels and women are concentrated at low levels (Dias and Wanasundera, 2002). Interestingly, in southern Africa, low-skilled women tend to be petty traders who are typically pendular migrants (Dodson, 1998). In France and Italy, over 50 percent of migrant women are believed to be engaged in domestic work (ILO, 2003, p. 11) and in Spain domestic service is the main route for 63 percent of non-Community foreign women (Collective Ioe, 2003). The situation is almost similar in Canada and its 'live-in-caregiver' programme (McKay, 2003). Domestic work is also the single most important category of employment among women migrants to the Gulf States, as well as to Lebanon and Jordan (Esim and Smith, 2004).

2.2. Skilled Jobs

Rising female literacy rates and changes in the structure of world economy have led to increasing participation of females at all levels of jobs, including the high-levels. This has been further fostered by changing status of women, especially in the Asian and Pacific region, triggered by the global influences:

- a. international capital through transnational corporations and banks
- b. demand for female labour in many of the new industrial plants as it is cheaper and perhaps more prone to manipulation than male labour

Increase in female labour force participation, and women as migrants have not simply been at the level of the rank and file in the manufacturing sector: women have been increasing their participation in the service sector and in middle-level and high-level occupations too.

Increasing feminisation of nearly all the major population movements is a virtual reality, which can be generalised. There has been a rapid expansion of the core production sectors and inclusion of women into manufacturing industries is the watershed trend caused by globalisation. Women have been increasingly employed in, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) sponsored labour intensive industries *inter alia* textiles, shoes and assembly of electronic products. As a result, it is a common trend today that women dominate the migration flows to many of the high growth, special economic zones of Asia. However, what needs to be taken care of is that women are generally preferred as they are prone to manipulation, can be paid less, be fired easily and forced to overwork in unhealthy conditions (Skeldon, 1999).

Migration of skilled workers is heterogeneous in its gender divisions, occupations and conditions of work (Iredale, 2004). Although, the native workers also experience a gendered labour market; female migrants face a highly gendered labour market in the destination country: men dominate the field of transnational corporations and in the Information Technology and Scientific sectors (HRST), accounting and engineering, with lesser women in these sectors.

Within national workforces fewer women have been entering IT-sector but for migrant women, this is often compounded by the work demand for constant physical mobility and flexibility between different places amongst software specialists (UNRISD, 2005).

A gendered demand structure may explain the dominance of a certain sex in a particular migration stream. For example, in Germany, in 2000, 88 percent of the Green card permits were allotted to men (SOPEMI, 2001), a majority of these scientists were from Eastern Europe which has an almost equal number of female scientists. Hence, gender imbalances do not necessarily exist in the sending countries. Clearly, women are in a minority in most migration streams involving skilled occupations. However, we find an exception when there is a clear preference and specific policy measures in the host countries for selecting female immigrants, like the policy in US, Canada and Japan, to attract nurses from the developing countries.

Also, female migrants are subject to ethnic/racial discrimination when seeking employment (Basnayake, 1999). Moreover, in New Zealand, although Chinese and Indian immigrant women are more likely to have completed final school certificates or higher degrees than the national average, they have higher levels of unemployment and lower incomes (Badkar, 2007). Globally, areas which are traditionally considered as female jobs and can be broadly classified as welfare and social professions like education, health and social work, employ high-skill women. Apart from the low-skill domestic services, the high-skill sector of nursing is also dominated

by females. Ninety percent or more of the nursing workforce comprises women (Buchan and Calman, 2004). High skill female migrants, with full high school and university degrees, also experience significant degree of deskilling and disqualification. Examples are: the deskilling found in the case of female domestic workers in Hong Kong and Canada, and international nurse recruits in the UK and Canada (Skeldon, 2004; McKay, 2003). Also, repeatedly high skill immigrant workers are subject to devaluation of educational credentials received abroad through licensing and re-certification requirements for their professions. They are often forced to accept subordinate and less secure jobs.

Migrant women have also ventured into entrepreneurship, being self-employed in the host country. As many consider the jobs in the destination countries as not good enough or 'no point' jobs, self employment helps them in gaining independence from exploitative practices and threat of deportation. It gives them working flexibility and a better chance to combine work and family responsibilities. Immigrant women are thus attracted towards self-employment because of a lack of alternatives, blocked mobility, and inability to find a job that fits their skills. However, they may encounter problems like complicated procedures, no information about potential sources of help, lack of fluency in local language and everyday racism (Lazardis, 2003).

2.3. Female Trafficking

One of the gravest concerns of international migration, trafficking of persons, has been growing both nationally and internationally. On one hand, trafficking in persons is particularly rampant in the countries of origin undergoing political and economic transformations and tension; on the other hand, it thwarts economically developed countries that are countries of destination and transit. Thus, nearly every country in the world is affected by trafficking, either as a country of destination, transit or origin, or as a combination of the above. Human trafficking is the third most money-spinning activity of organised crime groups worldwide. It appears that trafficking in persons poses a minimal risk for traffickers while yielding the highest profit. Not only the traffickers face little chance of trial and relatively low penalties when prosecuted, they bear significant monetary returns for the women they traffic for sexual exploitation.

As poverty disproportionately affects women (along with their children), they are more likely to be stirred to migrate hoping to improve the economic situation both for themselves and their families. Out of 1.3 billion absolute poor in the world today, 70 percent is comprised of women and their minor dependents. Further, restrictive regulations which reduce legal female

migration lead to a rise in illegal migration and as irregular migration multiplies the risk of exploitation of female migrants it might result in trafficking in order to avoid deportation. Trafficking is increasing rapidly not only due to rising demand but also as a result of larger and varied sources of supply due to precarious life conditions in many parts of the developing countries. But it is also increasing from rural areas of the developing world where the peasantry has been hit by agrarian crisis or in societies afflicted by violent conflict or ravaged by natural calamities.

A substantial amount of trafficking occurs not only for commercial sex work but also for use as slave labour in factories and other economic activities such as domestic or informal service sector work. Also many times trafficking is not by coercion but it is out of oppressive or abusive or extreme poverty conditions at home place. Hence, for millions of women, economic migration ends in sexual exploitation and debt bondage, with only limited success in utilizing available legal mechanisms to address their protection needs. The traffickers are also involved into luring females by false promises of high paying jobs, fraudulent marriages, etc. Andrijasevic (2008) found that majority of women who migrated through trafficking system were aware of the conditions they would work in but for them the prostitution contract was a part of the bigger migratory project. However, it is not only the individual economic situation of victims but also discrimination against women in the labour market, growing unemployment and a lack of skills and training which contribute to their willingness to search for improved living conditions and career opportunities via unorganised routes ultimately falling into the hands of the traffickers. It can be found that stricter immigration controls may increase the use of trafficking networks and stricter control on mobility is not likely to lessen rather heighten the involvement of organised crime.

3. Trends and Issues of Female Migration in and from India

Being a predominantly patriarchal society female migration from India has been traditionally undermined and constrained. However, similar to global trends Indian women have been migrating increasingly, both as dependent family members and as independent workers. They have migrated to the developed countries of the west, the Gulf countries, Australasia and other Asian countries. Indian females have been studied by migration academicians as left-behind wives of the Indian male migrants who are struggling for their family's survival of daily needs and the female migrants who have migrated for less-skilled jobs in the care industry, as nurses and domestic workers. But there is also an increasing trend of high-skill female migrants migrating from India as skilled labour and as students for higher education. Moreover, a large number of women enter the Indian border for

work through legal and illegal routes or trafficking which makes India a country of source, transit and destination of trafficked females who are victims of exploitation at work or in prostitution.

3.1. Emigration of females from Kerala

Kerala which is one of the top migrant sending Indian state, dominantly sends males migrants. In 2004, 83 percent emigrants were male. But importantly the proportion of female migrants has risen greatly from 9.3 percent in 1999 to 16.8 percent in 2004 (Table 4). Among return emigrants also, the proportion of females has increased from 10.9 percent (1999) to 15.3 percent (2004).

Table 4: Sex Composition of Migrants from Kerala, 1999 and 2004

	Emigrants (in lakhs)				Return Migrants (In lakhs)			
	2004	%	1999	%	2004	%	1999	%
Males	15.29	83.2	12.35	90.7	7.57	84.7	6.59	89.1
Females	3.09	16.8	1.27	9.3	1.37	15.3	0.81	10.9
Total	18.38	100.0	13.62	100.0	8.94	100.0	7.4	100.0

Source: Zachariah, K. C. And Rajan, S. I. (2009). *Migration and Development: The Kerala Experience*.

What is the most relevant fact here is that the percentage increase in the female migrants from Kerala has been 150 percent which is 23 percent for males (Table 5). Also the percentage increase in the total migrants from Kerala is 35 percent over the five years (1999-2004). Hence, it clearly points out the rising phenomenon of female migration from Kerala. The earnings of 40-50,000 Indian nurses in Gulf, 90 percent from Kerala, have contributed to pushing the state's per capita income from negative to 41 percent above the national average, while India has become the top remittance receiving country (Sharma, 2010).

Table 5: number of Emigrants by Marital Status and Sex, 1999 and 2004

	Males			Females			Total		
	2004	1999	% increase	2004	1999	% increase	2004	1999	% increase
Total	1523903	1236178	23.3	314575	125777	150.1	1838478	1361955	34.9

Source: Zachariah, K. C. and Rajan, S. I. (2009). *Migration and Development: The Kerala Experience*.

Out of the 15 million Indians in the UAE as reported by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, as of April 2009, unconfirmed sources indicate at

least one million are women (Migrant Forum in Asia, *Women Migrant Workers in the UAE: not quite in the portrait*, NGO submission to the 45th Session of the Committee on the elimination of Discrimination against Women). Further, a study conducted in 2008 on emigration from Kerala to the UAE revealed that many Kerala women do not go through emigration clearance that is mandatory to cross Indian borders to take up work abroad as domestic workers. This method of border crossing is usually used by migrants who do not have any employment contracts and who travel with the help of illegal agents. It enables easy mobility for women for whom crossing the borders are difficult due to various reasons (Zachariah and Rajan, 2008).

3.2. Migration of Domestic Female Workers

In the absence of the data on female migrants from India it becomes even more difficult to ascertain the proportion of these since they work as housemaids or 'entertainers' often a euphemism for prostitution. The number could be quite substantial going by reports that the media carries from time to time (Menon, 1997).

International migration of labour is determined by their demand and supply factors. Two major factors largely responsible for creating the demand for women workers in domestic work are: first, the rise in levels of income and standard of living in several countries of west and east Asia leading to hiring domestic workers as a status symbol and added convenience and second, rising female participation in the workforce, specially in the newly industrialising south-east and east Asian countries, leading to rising demand for overseas domestic workers, as domestic work carries low status and a low wage and is not taken up by local women.

The major female labour-exporting countries are all located in Asia. Many of these are the very same countries that were also exporting large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled men workers in the early 1970s. The migration of women workers is encouraged by the governments as they are a source of foreign exchange earnings and a pressure valve for high levels of unemployment and insufficient growth of income. In the order of the magnitude of the flows of women workers six countries in Asia are the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh and India.

While no firm estimates are available of the Indian women workers in west Asia, the informal estimate is that their number could be well in excess of 50,000 and perhaps closer to 1,00,000, if not as large as 2,00,000. In Kuwait alone, the number of women from India working as housemaids was put at 20,000 in 1987 when those from Bangladesh numbered only 500 (Shah, 1990). Women workers are going to Kuwait in large numbers and that too mostly for domestic work. For west Asia as a whole, it is believed that

between one-half and two-thirds of the Indian women workers are engaged in domestic work. There is evidence that Indian women are going to Singapore and Hong Kong for domestic work. The migration of Indian women for domestic work, be it to west Asia or to east Asia, it must be noted, takes place despite government policy which does not encourage such emigration (Gulati, 1997). It is quite possible therefore that part of this emigration is illegal. It is very unfortunate that the government of India publishes no information on the gender composition of the Indian overseas workers. Whether or not, such information is collected at all and at what level of disaggregation is not known. But several other labour exporting countries like the Philippines and Sri Lanka do collect such information and make their data public.

The Indian embassy in Kuwait has been reported as providing refuge to 180 nursing assistants alleging harassment by their employers (Gulati, 1997). According to a report published in an Indian fortnightly magazine, *India Today*, with regard to the situation now “the modest Indian embassy building in Kuwait city is already bursting at the seams with the new refugee influx of women. The result is that the auditorium for cultural functions has been converted into a makeshift refugee camp and community kitchen” (Gupta, 1992).

Deaths of Overseas Workers: The incidence of death of women domestic workers abroad is quite high. In two years, 1988-89, 48 Sri Lankan maids died. Of these 30 were listed as accidental, eight were suicides, six murders and only four on account of natural calamities (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, 1990). Similar information on Indian women workers engaged in domestic work is not known as our government does not either collect such information or, if it is collected, release it to public. Deaths of overseas workers do get reported from time to time in the local language press, but there is no report on the causes of overseas deaths.

There is need for action at the international level with respect to working conditions of overseas women workers in general. As things stand at present, these workers enjoy no protection from the local labour laws as several of these laws specifically exclude domestic servants. In 2007, India banned the emigration for women less than 30 years of age going abroad to work as domestic help and caregivers. The compulsory age limit for women emigrants who are emigrating on ECR passports to ECR countries has been set at 30 years, irrespective of the nature or category of employment. Besides, for all women and unskilled category of workers, embassy attestation has been made compulsory (MOIA 2009, p. 30). However, the efficiency of this measure remains uncertain because it can push women migrants resorting to clandestine mobility mechanisms. Thus, the objective

of protecting the women migrants from trafficking and exploitation may not be fully achieved.

3.3. Nurse Migration from India

Indian nurses have been migrating since long due to the high demand of health personnel in the developed countries. Healthcare institutions in developed countries face a shortage of nurses and to fill the lacuna they look up to Asian and African countries. Apart from Philippines, they have recognised India as a source country for well-trained and English speaking nurses. The increased demand for nurses in developed countries has led to the emergence of private recruitment agencies exporting nurses from India. The three main hubs are New Delhi, Bangalore and Kochi. The agencies based in New Delhi focus on the US market while those based in Bangalore and Kochi focus on other destination countries like the Gulf countries, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Ireland, and the UK. Majority of Indian nurses aspiring to migrate hail from south India. The state governments in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi have established State Manpower Export Corporations and many of these corporations have started facilitating international migration of nurses to safeguard them against exploitation from the private recruitment agents (Khadria, 2006).

There are 22,786 Indian nurses in the OECD countries, 110,774 nurses from Philippines and 7569 from Malaysia. (OECD, 2007; SOPEMI 2007 Edition). Indian nurses have been migrating to the US also as the percentage of Indian nurse candidates for US licensure examination has increased after 2001 (Table 6). India holds first rank in the UK with 3.6 thousand nurses in 2005-06, and second rank in the US with 3.8 thousand nurses (Tables 6 and 7). Further, Indian nurses are significant in numbers in Ireland and Australia as shown in Tables 8 and 9. Also, for several decades Indian medical professionals viz., doctors and nurses have been serving in the Middle East and English speaking developed countries.

Table 6: Percentage of First-time, Indian-trained Registered Nurse (RN) Candidates for US Licensure Examination: 1997-2001, 2007, 2008

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2007	2008
Total No. Candidates	6,574	6,045	6,381	7,501	8,613	28356	NA
India	7.0% (460)	6.0% (363)	6.0% (383)	6.0% (450)	4.5% (388)	19.15% (5,430)	(3773)

Source: <https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm>

Note: The number of nurses is given in parentheses.

Table 7: Indian-Trained Nurses Registered per Annum in the UK, 1998-2006

Country	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
India	30	96	289	994	1883	3073	3690	3551

Source: Nursing and Midwives Council (NMC), www.nmc-uk.org.

Table 8: New Indian Registered Nurses in Australia, New South Wales and Victoria

Australia	New South Wales	Victoria
(1998-2005)	(2004-2005)	(2004-2005)
719	50-100	150

Source: http://www.sueztosuva.org.au/south_asia/2006/Healey.pdf

Table 9: Applications for New Registration of Indian Nurses in Ireland, 2001-05

Country of Origin	Total Number of Nurses
India	874

Source: http://www.sueztosuva.org.au/south_asia/2006/Healey.pdf

3.4. Indian Females in the US

US has been one of the most favoured destination of Indian professionals and students since liberalization of the Indian economy. Indians have become an influential migrant community in the US as also becoming the proud Indian diaspora. While Indian flows to the US have been believed to comprise male professionals but female migrants have also migrated to the US in significant numbers, both as independent workers and dependent family members, and this trend has been increasing. Table 10 shows that Indian female migrants were in large proportions among total Indians naturalized in 2008 in the US. Moreover, figures 2 and 3 depict the workforce participation and the median earnings of the Indian females in the US in 2000 clearly showing that they are not simply a family migrant but more than 50 percent are also actively participating in the labour market, however these figures are expected to rise in future. Also, there is a rising trend in the migration of women from India to the US, Australia and other developed countries for the purpose of higher education.

3.5. The Asian Indian Women and IT sector in US

The Asian Indian Women and IT in US are not a homogeneous group. We can at least identify three groups of women connected with this sector: (i) the high profile successful entrepreneurs (ii) the software professionals on H-1B work visa (iii) the dependent wives (on H-4 visa) of male software professionals on H-1B visa.

Table 10: Occupational Classification of Indians Naturalised in 2008, by Sex

Occupation	Total	Male	Female
Management, professional, and related occupations	14,414	8,891	5,523
Service occupations	685	248	437
Sales and office occupations	1,964	838	1,126
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	27	12	15
Construction, extraction, maintenance and repair occupations	65	60	5
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1,250	881	369
Military	67	46	21
No occupation/not working outside home	5,336	1,815	3,521
Homemakers	1,319	12	1,307
Students or children	3,412	1,495	1,917
Retirees	312	198	114
Unemployed	293	110	183
Unknown	2,163	0,164	1,987

Source: US Department of Homeland Security (2009).

Among the high profile successful Asian Indian women entrepreneurs, the names of Cisco's vice-president Jayashree Ullal, Yahoo content editor Srinija Srinivasan, Digital think's chairwoman Vinita Gupta, Smart Modular Company founder Lata Krishnan, Right Works CEO Vani Kola, former Hewlett Packard GM and current CEO of Tioga Systems Radha Basu and numerous others are now very familiar in the Silicon Valley (Banerjee, 2000). Indian women have carved a niche for themselves in the IT sector in the US. They have been working at high-profile posts and have achieved autonomy and independence. However, for every one successful Asian Indian woman in the IT sector in US, there are hundreds of other women - trained software engineers coming as dependent wives of the male computer professionals. No doubt there are a few out of these women, who are lucky enough to get a job in the US, but their lives are different from the women millionairesses and billionairesses in this sector.

Sircar (2000) brings out three categories of Indian female going to the US. First the full-time home-maker wives not having advanced college degrees of the male professionals who came in the 1960s and are at end of middle adulthood and at the height of their earning potential. The second segment consists of highly educated females who came during 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and the spouses of males migrating during this time who are college-educated, often professionals themselves. Professional women from urban middle-class backgrounds constitute a higher proportion of the population now than ever before. The third segment includes the relatives of earlier migrants in the previous two groups sponsored under the family

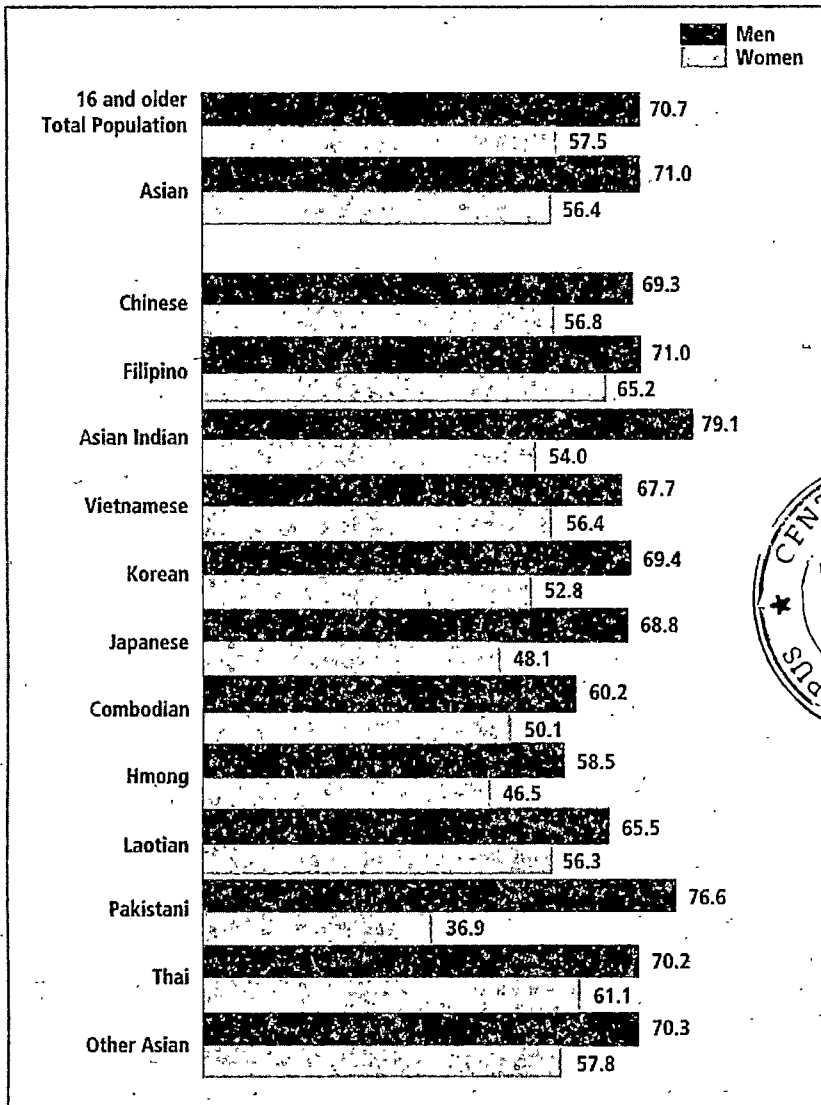
Gender and International Migration

Rashmi Sharma

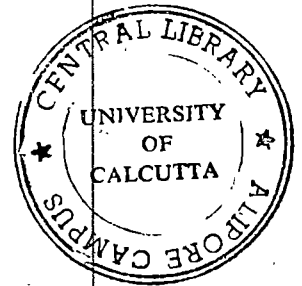
reunification programme. Also, it is found that in many cases the single women have come here along with their boyfriends to escape ostracism of the society back home due to inter-caste marriages.

Although many of the immigrant wives were highly qualified and even working it is found that most of them talk of quitting it once they have kids showing a heightened consideration for their family and their roles as

Figure 2: Labour Force Participation Rate for Asian Groups in the US by Sex, 2000

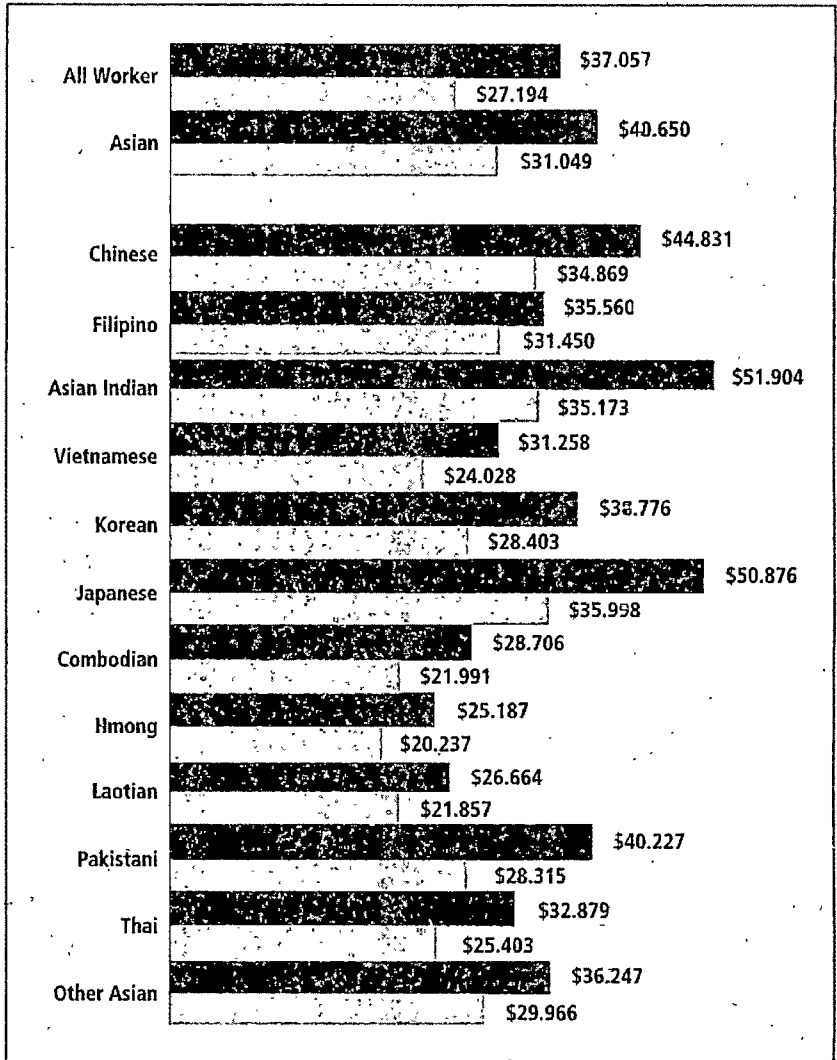


Source: US Census Bureau (2004): Census 2000



mothers. But Devi (2002) contends that in reality this was a 'forced choice' in order to make adjustments in their career aspirations for their husband's job. Dasgupta (1989, p. 115) stated that "it is to avert the strains in conjugal relations that the Indian immigrant spouses resort to old world values". While the male H-1B visa software professionals in US can be categorised as elite workers their H-4 visa wives were differently placed. Even the position of their female colleagues with H-1B visa, working in the computer industry is

Figure 3: Median Earnings of Asian Groups by Sex in the US, 1999



Source: US Census Bureau (2004): Census 2000

different. The experiences of the Asian Indian women in the US on an H-1B or H-4 visa highlight the deepening contradiction between the economic and social restructuring between the spheres of production and reproduction. McDowell (1991, p. 389) contested that current economic changes are beneficial for women. Long held beliefs that women's entry into waged labour has emancipatory potential do not stand in such situations.

The highly qualified H-4 visa dependent wives are confined to the domestic sphere to perform the role of reproduction. Such adjustments by spouses of high-tech employees are not unknown. In the hi-tech industries it is no less sexist, it is only constructed on different axes. Nowhere, the drudgery of domestic labour shouldered by the wives is acknowledged as a facilitating factor, enabling their professional husbands to perform well. These are the unsung heroines partially eclipsed in the sunrise IT industry in US (S. Uma Devi, 2002).

Unfortunately, there has been a rise in the number of battered women among the H-4 dependent wives (reported by Sakhi- a South Asian women's organisation based in New York to help battered women). There were 150 complaints lodged in the last six months of 2002 by women with H-4 visa and what is worse is that this is growing. The legal right to stay in US, of the wives of the thousands of H-1B software engineers and programmers who enter US every year, depends on their wage earner husbands. Such women are 'held' prisoners by immigration policies that give their husbands complete control over their lives (Chaudhry, 2000). The current immigration laws based on the notion that a man owns his family is weighted against women. Under this system, women who enter the US on an H-4 spousal visa have to leave the country when their marriage ends (Chaudhry, 2000, p. 2). No one can guarantee them safety, as there are no laws to protect them.

However, unlike the women H-1B software professionals and the H-4 visa dependent wives, the position of the high profile Asian Indian women in the IT seems to be different in this regard. All of them consider themselves to be beyond gender differences. They do not think of themselves as women or being different from men and are achieving heights in their careers.

3.6. Female Trafficking in and out

India has been a sending, receiving and transit country for female trafficking. It receives large numbers of female migrants from Nepal and Bangladesh, as a destination country and also acts as a transit country for further trafficking them to the Gulf and the East-Asian countries. Also, Indian women are lured, cheated and trafficked to these countries. Since India shares an open border with Nepal and Bangladesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh among others act as entry points along the long border.

The exact numbers of women and children of Nepal who are trafficked to India are not known but reports indicate that Nepalese girls and women have been found in brothels in Mumbai, India (Datta, 2005). In recent years hundreds of thousands of women and girls have been trafficked across the Indo-Nepal borders. Between 100,000 to 200,000 Nepali women are working in the Indian Sex industry, and that between 5000 and 8000 young women are trafficked for prostitution into India each year (Xinhua News Agency, 2001; Padam, 2002). A total of 12,000 sex workers live in Sonagachi only and vast majority are Bengali. More than 40 percent of 484 prostituted girls rescued during major raids of brothels in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1996 were from Nepal (Masako, 1998). Bangladeshi women also figure prominently in Kolkata brothels.

The volume of documented female Nepali migrants in India for the census years from 1951 to 1991 shows a decline in the documented migration with rural bias (RGI, 2001). These migrants are mainly engaged in tea gardens, primary sector as agricultural labourer. A greater number of migrant Nepali women are employed in other sectors – including the industrial, construction, transport, hotel, restaurant and domestic service sectors – both in Nepal and abroad, rather than in commercial sex work (*The Weekly Telegraph*, 2001). Though census records show declining trends recent literature highlights increasing illegal female migration along the path of open border and trafficking (*The Weekly Telegraph*, 2001).

The growth of labour agencies promoting their ability to find work for women seeking wage labour also increases the possibility of trafficking where a proportion of these are unscrupulous and ally themselves with traffickers (Mehta 2003, p. 60).

Girls in prostitution and domestic service in India, Pakistan and the Middle East are tortured, held in virtual imprisonment, sexually abused, and raped. (Sinha, year not known). In Bombay, children as young as nine are bought for up to 60,000 rupees, or US \$ 2,000, at auctions where Arabs bid against Indian men who believe sleeping with a virgin cures gonorrhoea and syphilis. (Freidman, 1996).

The root cause of illegal migration and trafficking in women is ever increasing poverty. Other factors that fuel the trafficking and prostitution of Nepalese women and children include an open border, economic destitution, and sex discrimination. Trafficking cannot be separated from globalization and livelihood issue. Trafficking in women and girls is easy along the 1,740 mile-long open border between India and Nepal. Trafficking in Nepalese women and girls is less risky than smuggling narcotics and electronic equipment into India. Traffickers ferry large groups of girls at a time without the hassle of paperwork or threats of police checks. Traffickers also find

protection from corrupt border patrol officials and politicians, thereby escaping any potential prosecution. (Human Rights Watch, 1995): The procurer-pimp-police network makes the process even smoother. Bought for as little as Rs (Nepalese) 1,000, girls have been known to fetch up to Rs 30,000 in later transactions. Police are paid by brothel owners to ignore the situation. Girls may not leave the brothels until they have repaid their debt, at which time they are sick, with HIV and/or tuberculosis, and often have children of their own. (Wadhwa, 1998). A preference for women of a certain race or ethnicity constitutes another factor playing an important role in creating vulnerability for women stereotyped in this way (Sen and Nair, pp. 176-177).

The nature of organising trafficking has been shifting over the past decade, given the increase in the use of new technologies. In sophisticated operations, newspaper advertisements are used through apparently legal shop-front organisations along with internet and mobile phones, and victims can be moved fairly seamlessly through a series of hands making identification of the traffickers very difficult (Wright, 2008). Ironically, travel restrictions have had a negative impact on Bangladeshi women over the past decade, but newer restrictions, supposedly to protect women in Nepal, also ended up acting against their interests. Women who seek work outside their place of residence have had to resort to those offering illegal migration opportunities, which inevitably bring them into direct contact with smugglers and traffickers. Receiver countries such as India usually adopt a legalistic immigration approach, and this gives little consideration to the fact that the woman trafficked is a victim (Wright, 2008).

What is more important is to address what is usually invisible, “the ‘demand’ side: the men who buy trafficked women” (Fergus, 2005, p. 32). Dealing with this side of the equation has never been much in evidence in South Asian approaches to trafficking of women. The implication here is that the demand factors need at least as much attention as those of supply. The demand factor is the root cause of trafficking. “Unless the demand is tackled, it is not possible to prevent trafficking (Sen and Nair, p. 121)”.

3.7. Teacher Migration from India

The demand from receiving countries for female migrants - domestic workers, nurses or teachers - is more stable than for construction workers. Indian teachers have been migrating to the developed and the developing countries of the world. Since teaching is a female dominated profession the migration flows have been found to be dominated by Indian women who went both on work permit and on spouse visa taking up teaching in the destination countries (Sharma, 2009). Such a migration of teachers from

India to the developed countries have been instigated by heavy demand of teachers in the developed countries like the US, the UK and Australia where Indian teachers are in high demand (especially in English speaking countries). Also, there were Indian teachers working in Gulf countries like UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, etc.

4. Concluding Remarks

Women form almost 50 percent of the migrant population world over and since contemporarily migration has been seen as a tool for development of both the sending and the destination countries, there is somewhat increased awareness of the important role that gender plays in international migration and hence in development. The paper reflects the increased proportion of migrant women in all categories alongside increased recognition by scholars and policymakers alike that their experience of migration differs from that of men (Taran and Geronimi, 2003, p. 10). What emerges is a highly complex picture of gendered outcomes of migration.

On one hand, migration can be an empowering experience for women, as it entails moving away from societies with traditional and patriarchal forms of authority allowing women to work, to earn their own money and to exercise greater decision-making power in their daily lives. Women who migrate may also have the opportunity to learn new skills and enjoy a higher socio-economic status when they eventually return to their own country. On the other hand, regrettably, migration can have an almost opposite effect. Women who migrate for the purpose of marriage, domestic labour, or to work in the entertainment and sex industries are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and social isolation, as are those who are trafficked. Such problems are reinforced when migrant women do not know the language of the country they are living in or do not have access to supportive social networks. Some of them face discrimination in the labour market and find themselves in a situation of 'brain waste', when they have to take up jobs for which they are over-qualified. In others, migrant women may be subject to dismissal and deportation if they become pregnant or become socially stigmatized if they contract HIV/AIDS. Both the low-skilled and the highly skilled women are subject to gendered and ethnically differentiated forms of discrimination and prejudice.

There is a need for migration policies and programmes to be gender-sensitive, to give special attention to the issues and impacts of female migration and ensure that women are empowered. Efforts must be made to ensure that women can exercise human rights and realise their full potential. Migrants in general and migrant women in particular, need to be enabled to have a voice in decision-making. This helps to address the complex root

causes which lead to migration and to maximise the benefits of migration to the individuals involved.

The statistics on international migration by gender that make it possible to identify the characteristics of migrants are scarce and uneven across countries and hence the first step should be to collect proper data on female migration. As a major player in international migration India has a serious lack of systematic data on female emigrants in specific, even the new Emigration Bill waiting to be proposed, does not embark on the need for a gender-sensitive migration policy.

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Note

1. The UNFPA report titled State of the World Population 2006 elaborates on the role of remittances in poverty reduction and development and discusses the role of money remitted by women to their home countries.

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Patrons and Networks of Patronage in the Publication of Tamil Classics, c 1800-1920

V. Rajesh

Works are produced within a specific order that has its own rules, conventions, and hierarchies, but they escape all these and take on a certain destiny in their peregrinations – which can be in a very long time span – about the social world...Thought of (and thinking of himself or herself) as a demiurge, the writer none the less creates in a state of dependence. Dependence upon the rules (of patronage, subsidy, and the market) that define the writer's condition. Dependence (on an even deeper level) on the unconscious determinations that inhabit the work and that make it conceivable, communicable and decipherable.

- Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the 14th and 18th Centuries*, Stanford, 1994, p. x.

If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition.

- E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1980, p. 10.

In the academic writings on the reconstitution of the Tamil literary canon in the nineteenth century colonial Tamil society, a predominant emphasis has been placed on the life and activities of a single Tamil scholar named Uthamathanapuram Venkatasubbaiyar Swaminatha Aiyar, known widely as the grand father of Tamil (*Tamil Thatha*). His autobiography *En Charitram* ('The Story of My Life') written between 1940 and 1942 continues to remain a standard source for scholars to understand the history of the 'rediscovery' and the publication of classical Tamil literary works during the nineteenth century.¹ In most of the writings the 'rediscovery' of

classical Tamil literature and the framing of the 'Dravidian' family of languages by Robert Caldwell figure as one of the cause for the emergence of non-Brahmin political consciousness and movement during the early decades of the twentieth century. Such easy equations fail to understand the fact that there was a different social configuration that made possible the recovery and publication of Tamil classics during the nineteenth century that had less to do with the twentieth century political vocabulary of Brahmin-non-Brahmin divide in the Tamil political landscape. In other words, the social history of the recovery and publication of Tamil classics in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century was dictated by a class project in which a conglomeration of upper caste landholders - *śmartha* Brahmins, *chettians*, *mutaliyars*, *pillais* and *maravars* - were active participants along with institutions like the dominant landholding Saiva Mutts and the Tamil language promotion associations under the hegemonic colonial economy.

The publication of Tamil classical texts like *Tirukkural*, *Civakacintamani*, *Cilappatikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Pattuppattu*, *Purananuru*, *Kalittokai*, *Ainkurunuru*, *Pattirrupattu*, *Narrinai*, *Akananuru*, *Paripatal* and *Kuruntokai* was part of a larger effort which begun at the turn of the nineteenth century to transform the Tamil literary canon from a manuscript tradition into print form. It was neither a linear process nor an effort by a few individual scholars. In the competitive environment under colonialism, the publication of Tamil classical texts was met with competition. The success of the editors of classical texts depended on their ability to secure effective patronage. An attempt is made here to detail how traditional Tamil scholars like Swaminatha Aiyar, Damodaram Pillai and Arumuka Navalar succeeded in getting patronage for publishing the classical Tamil literary works. The publication of classical Tamil literary works began only during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However the developments that took place during the last quarter of the nineteenth century cannot be considered as an isolated phase in the nineteenth century print and publishing history of Tamil. It was part of a larger project that actually began at the turn of the nineteenth century when printed word started proliferating in Tamil society.

Three Phases of Print and Publishing History

We can identify three broad phases in the history of the print and publishing of Tamil literature in nineteenth century colonial Tamilnadu. The first phase begins with the founding of the College of Fort St. George in 1812. The College press was established where Tamil literary and grammatical works were printed with the active patronage from the Madras government. The college appointed native pandits well versed in the languages of south India to teach the south Indian languages to arriving civil servants. At the

same time, they were also involved in editing and publishing the native literature and grammar. Efforts were made to collect the literature circulating in palm-leaf manuscripts from various parts of the Tamil country under the direction of the College. Number of native pandits of the College and their students were to play an important role in the shaping of Tamil literary culture of the nineteenth century.

The second phase begins with the editorial and printing activities associated with the Saiva revival movement inaugurated by Arumuka Navalar in Jaffna which had an impact in Tamilnadu. In fact Navalar established Saiva schools and printing presses in Tamilnadu and maintained active links with the landholding Zamindars of Ramanathapuram and Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, a largest landholding Saiva Mutt of the nineteenth century Madras Presidency. Arumuka Navalar left a legacy in the sphere of print and publishing of Tamil literary works that often by his followers came to be regarded as belonging to the 'Navalar' school. Simultaneously, when Navalar was engaged in polemical battle with Christian Missionaries in Jaffna and printing the Tamil literary works, there was a proliferation of the printing of Tamil literary works in Madras. It is typically represented in the print and publishing activities of two of the foremost editors of Tamil literary works of the 1830s to the 1850s, namely, Saravanapperumalaiyar and Visakappapperumalaiyar. Basing their headquarters at Kalvivilakka Accukkutam, these two scholars who hailed from Virasaiva community printed many Tamil literary works for two decades beginning with the 1830s. The characteristic feature of this phase of the print and publishing history of Tamil literature is the dual role played by the Tamil *pandits* as printers and editor/publishers. Ramanuja Kavirayar, one of the reputed Tamil scholars of mid-nineteenth century Madras composed, edited and published Tamil literary works in the press he owned.

It was upon the foundations of the two phases that the third phase begun which is represented in the editorial and publishing activities of C.W. Damodaram Pillai, U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar and others. This phase begun roughly from the 1870s but became more transparent in the 1880s. For the next twenty years beginning 1880, three major Tamil epics namely *Cilappatikaram*, *Civakacintamani* and *Manimekalai* were published in full for the first time. What is known widely as Sangam literature namely *Pattuppattu*, *Purananuru*, *Kalittokai* were published before 1900; and subsequently, *Akananuru*, *Pattirrupattu*, *Paripatal*, *Narrinai*, *Ainkurunuru* and *Kurunthokai* were published. All these literary works published in full for the first time after the 1880s considerably altered the understanding of Tamil language, literature and its history as never before. Hence, the third phase needs to be mapped more comprehensively in relation to the first two phases.

The chronological distinction we made here of three broad phases are not rigid or mutually exclusive but the phased understanding will help us to map the changing social conditioning of print and publishing history.

College of Fort St George and Tamil Pandits

The College of Fort St. George was formed in Madras (known in Tamil scholarly circles as *Cennai Kalvic Cankam*) in 1812. The College represented a new institutional patron of Indian literature and played an important role in the publication of Tamil and Telugu classics. Described as a 'marshalling yard', the College brought together the British Orientalists, native scholars and civil servants in the study of the languages and literatures of south India. It appointed head masters to teach the indigenous languages to the junior civil servants. Apart from the instruction of languages of south India, the College also taught Hindu and Muhammadan law. The College is said to have spearheaded the revival of letters by actively promoting the learning and teaching of languages of south India and printing the grammatical and literary works. It formed a scholarly library that included both printed books and non-printed hand written manuscripts. It recruited staff and entrusted them with the work of collecting palm leaf manuscripts from various regions of south India. A. Muttusami Pillai, the manager of the College of Fort St. George, in his biography of C.J. Beschi, gives a graphic account of his acquaintance with Orientalists associated with the College of Fort St. George like A.D. Campbell, Benjamin Guy Babington, Francis Whyte Ellis and Sir Walter Elliot. He also informs us that his expedition to south Tamilnadu was motivated by Ellis's desire to collect the works of C. J. Beschi.⁶ Father Beschi's works were in demand in Madras, especially the grammars of low and high Tamil, *Tembavani* and the Latin translation of *Tirukkural*.

The idea of establishing a press for the College was on the agenda of the Committee, formed to establish the College. Accordingly, with the active involvement of Ellis, College Press was established in 1813 with English and Tamil fonts readily available. The College encouraged the head masters to write books which the College Press printed. According to Kamil Zvelebil, the College of Fort St. George in Madras had an important role to play in the early publishing of various books in Tamil.¹⁰

At the time of the establishment of the College Press in 1813, there existed a few printing presses in Madras. However, the College Press would soon overshadow the rest at least till 1830s when it published some twenty-five books. In 1814, the works supposed to have been printed at the College Press were the following:

1. The Rev C.J. Beschi's Latin Grammar of the Low Tamil.
2. Tamil translation of *Uttara Ramayana* from the original Sanskrit, a

class book for the use of the European students by Chidambara Pandaram, the head Tamil master at the College.

3. A Treatise on Tamil Grammar.

4. Rev. C.J. Beschi, Latin Dictionary of Low Tamil.

5. Rev. C.J. Beschi, Latin Dictionary of High Tamil.

6. Collection of Tamil Tales by Chidambara Pandaram.

7. A Tamil translation from the Sanskrit of the *Mitacara* or the Commentary of the Vigneswara on the text of *Yagna Valkya*, a general treatise on Hindu Law by Perur and Chidambara Pandaram.¹²

The annual administrative reports of the College prepared by the Board of Superintendence present a list of books supposed to have been printed by the College Press. The list does not corroborate with the actual existing books in libraries today due to number of reasons the details of which are beyond the scope of this paper. The government patronage to the publications of the College was more transparent as all of them were directly useful for the colonial administration. Most of the works printed at the College Press were grammars which had immediate utility for learning the native languages. The annual expenditure of the press department of the College from 1812 to 1825 shows a gradual increase from one percent to 10.1 percent in relation to the overall expenditure of the College every year.¹³ Except the printing of the translation of *Tirukkural* by Ellis, the majority of the works printed at the College did not include any of the classical Tamil literary works. In other words, the Tamil literary works printed by the College Press did not in any way result in a new understanding of Tamil literary past.

Thomas Trautmann argues that since College of Fort St. George played a significant role in the collection of Tamil literary works in palm-leaf manuscripts from all over south India, the beginnings of Tamil renaissance should be traced to the early nineteenth century instead of conventional understanding that it begun only during the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ However the understandings of Tamil literary history did not change till the publication of classics that actually begun only from 1880s. In fact the Orientalists like Francis Whyte Ellis grossly misrepresented the Tamil literary past arguing that *Civalacintamani* is 'probably more ancient than any'. The fact that Ellis and other Orientalists of the early nineteenth Madras were totally unaware of the existence of a body of classical literature in Tamil dating back to the early centuries of the Christian era raises problems concerning the early nineteenth century beginnings of Tamil renaissance. The Tamil *pandits* appointed by the College worked under the direction of Orientalists mostly as subordinate partners. At a time when patronage to Tamil scholarship declined, the efforts of the College in Madras established by the government appeared in the eyes of Tamil *pandits* as representing the

revival of Tamil letters. Far from College reviving the letters, Tamil *pandits* ended up serving the needs of the colonial state. The class background of the native *pandits* appointed by the College reveal that most of them belonged to the traditional land holding upper castes.

Tamil Pandits and the Proliferation of Printing Presses in Madras

After the Act of 1835 was passed by Charles Metcalfe which allowed the natives to own printing presses, there was a proliferation of native printing presses existing independent of government patronage. Between 1830s and 1870s, the Tamil literary works were printed in presses like Laxmi Vilasa Accukkudam, Prabhakara Accukkudam, Viveka Vilakka Accukudam, Kalvivilakka Accukudam, Shanmuga Vilasa Accukudam, Muttamil Vilakka Accukudam, Saraswati Vilasa Accukudam, Avvai Tamil Vilakka Accukudam, Kalvikkata Accukudam and Vidyanupala Yantra Accukudam. Among them, an important role to print the Tamil literary works during the late 1830s and the 1840s was taken up by Kalvivilakka Accukutam by Saravanapperumalaiyar and Visakapperumalaiyar of Madras. Kandappaiyar, the father of Saravanapperumalaiyar and Visakapperumalaiyar learned Tamil language and literature under Kacciappa Munivar of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam. Hailing from Tiruttanikai, a village near Madras, the two brothers learnt Tamil under Ramanuja Kavirayar before taking up teaching and editorial works. Visakapperumalaiyar taught Tamil at *Cakala Castra Kalvi Calai* in Madras while simultaneously engaging himself with editing and printing Tamil literary works. Together the Perumal brothers established Kalvi Vilakka Accukutam at Otterikucappettai near Madras, and printed the first book in 1834. Stuart Blackburn argues that together the Perumal brothers wrote or edited some twenty-four books till 1847, including works like the medieval Tamil grammar *Nannul*, *Tirukkural*, *Naitatam*, *Viralivitutu*, *Ciru Kuli*, *Perum Kuli*, and *Kola Tipikai*.²³ This assessment of printing output by Perumal brothers by Blackburn appears an underestimation. It is probably likely that together they printed over seventy books including *Tirumurukarrupatai*, later included in Tamil Saiva canonical literature as well. Their printing of *Tirumurukarrupatai* prior to 1839, more than a decade before Arumuka Navalar printed the same in 1851, requires a rethinking of our conventional understanding that it was Navalar who first brought out the text in print form.²⁴ Apart from *Tirumurukarrupatai* they also edited and published *Cankattuttirikatuka Urai* before 1839.

Visakapperumalaiyar mentions four addresses beneath the list of books for sending the orders. It included apart from his own Kalvivilakka Accukutam at Otterikuppam, Chennai, Muttuveeracamy Pillai of Putuchery, Subbaraya Aiyar of Kotalur and Ramalinka Mutaliyar of Arcot.²⁵

There is no doubt that Visakapperumalaiyar was one of the prolific editors of Tamil literary works stretching two decades from mid-1830s. He taught Tamil at the Presidency College and helped scholars like Rev. Peter Percival and Miron Winslow in their projects of dictionaries. Yet, in all his editorial activities he was hardly encouraged or patronized by the Madras Government. The government was solely concerned with encouraging the missionaries and civil servants in the production of Tamil grammars and dictionaries and in this project, native *pandits* were made assistants. The proliferation of the printing of Tamil literary works did not receive enough attention among the missionaries and the British civil servants. In their writings on the history of Tamil language and literature, they relied on H.H. Wilson's catalogue of Mackenzie's Manuscripts and William Taylor's *A Catalogue Raisonnee of Oriental Manuscripts in the Government Library* (three volumes). The characteristic feature of this phase during the nineteenth century is the dual role played by the Tamil scholars as printers and publishers.

Arumuka Navalar and the Publication of Saiva Tamil Literature

The Saiva revival movement spearheaded by Arumuka Navalar (1822-1879) in Jaffna in response to the Christian missionary activities had a profound impact on not only Tamilnadu but also on the history of printing in the nineteenth century. Born in a dominant landowning caste in Jaffna, Arumuka Navalar's early educational experience at the Wesleyan Mission School in Jaffna shaped his career as a Saiva polemicist, revivalist, author and editor of ancient Tamil literary and grammatical works.²⁶ It has been argued that there was a much more favourable climate in Jaffna than in South India for educational and intellectual awakening due to the close relationship and inter-cultural exchange between the natives and Christian missionaries. The preponderant composition of Saiva Vellala community in Jaffna when compared to the overall population was also responsible for the conversion of dominant castes in Jaffna. This was a threat to Saivism as realized by Arumuka Navalar who initiated a Saiva revival movement in Jaffna beginning with his famous *Pracankam* (religious sermon) at Vannarpannai Civan Koyil in 1847.²⁷ At the Wesleyan Mission School at the instance of Rev. Peter Percival, he taught students in Tamil and English before working for a project of translating the Bible into Tamil. This early educational experience at the Wesleyan Mission School initially as student/teacher and then as translator of the Bible brought him into contact with Western education and the new media of print introduced by the Protestant missionaries. Navalar was to later put to use the rich experience he gained at the Wesleyan Mission School in the composition of pamphlets and rendering of the Saiva religious

texts in prose format for larger audience in his movement to revive Saivism against the so-called threat posed by Christian missionaries. Even when engaged with the Bible translation, Navalar realized the threat to Saivism due to Protestant missionary activities that included, apart from spreading the message of the Bible, the criticism of native religion as well. After resigning from the Wesleyan Mission School, Navalar established a Saiva School at Vannarpannai in 1848; and in 1849, he visited Tiruvavatuturai Atinam where he was conferred the title of 'Navalar' (scholar). After purchasing a printing press, named subsequently as Vityanupalana Yantrasalai, from south India, he began his editorial activities that were to remain his prime occupation till his death. He authored and printed series of textbooks for students of his school titled *Palapatam* beginning from 1851. Apart from these textbooks, Navalar also printed *Cauntariyalakari*, *Periya Puranam*, *Tirukkovaigar*, *Tirukkural*, *Tirumurukarruppatai* and a number of provocative pamphlets. Despite his commitment to Saivism throughout his lifetime, Navalar had a larger Tamil literary consciousness and this is borne out from the list of books that he aimed to print which included number of non-Saiva works.²⁸ Unlike other editors of Tamil literary works of his time, Navalar was concerned with printing the *Urai* (commentary) wherever possible. It also attests to the fact that Navalar was engaged in popularising the Tamil classics during his lifetime instead of maintaining its classicality and archaic nature. A mere glance at his edition of Manikkavacakar's *Tirukkovaigar* published in 1860, where at the end of the book he gives an advertisement containing a detailed list of books then he had published and intended to publish, would provide us a clue to the kind of project that Navalar was involved in at the height of his life. The list contained seventy-nine books out of which sixty-two remained in print.

The *Tirukkovaigar* edition of Arumuka Navalar contained a special foreword by the foremost traditional Tamil *pandit* of the time. Mahavidwan Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, his students Thyagaraya Chettiar, and Subbaraya Chettiar wrote *Cirappuppayiram* (special preface), praising the efforts of Arumuka Navalar and the work he edited, in a highly conventional poetic form. Apart from them, Tiruvavatuturai Atina Vidwan Tantavaraya Swamikal and Tiricirapuram Murugaiyappillai also wrote *Carrukkavi* in the special preface.²⁹ Similarly for the *Tirukkural* edition of Arumuka Navalar published in 1861, Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, Thyagaraya Chettiar, Subaraya Chettiar and Jeyvanayakam Pillai wrote special preface in a conventional poetic format. Navalar was patronized by wealthy landlords who belonged to the Saiva faith.³⁰ While in Tamilnadu, Navalar was patronized by the Zaminadars of Ramanathapuram and wealthy landholding Mutts like Tiruvavatuturai Atinam. Muthurama-

linga Setupati; father of Baskara Setupati, a Zaminadar of Ramanathapuram was known for his Tamil learning and ability to compose Tamil poems. Through his elder brother Ponnuswamy Tevar, Muthuramalinga Setupati extended financial help for the printing of old Tamil literary works. He patronized Arumuka Navalar in the printing of *Tirukkural* with the commentary of Parimeśakar, *Tirukkovaigarurai*, *Setupuranam*, *Illakkana-kottu*, *Illakkana Vilakkaccuravali* and *Tarukka Cankirakam*.³¹ In his publication efforts, Navalar also mobilized money through subscription and the collection of signatures for the purchase of editions in advance before the works were published. Advertisements for printing the Tamil literary and grammatical works were published in *The Morning Star*. For printing 'Karikai', a grammatical work based on *Tolkappiyam* and *Yapparunkalam*, an advertisement was placed in *The Morning Star*. It stated that those who wanted to get a copy must send their signature and subscription money to Tiruttanikai Kandasamy Iyer of Kalvivilakka Accukkutam at Chennai. It is also stated in the advertisement that once enough signatures have been mobilized then the printing work would begin.³² A similar advertisement for the printing of *Sethu Puranam* is also found. An advertisement for the printing of *Tiruvilayatal Puranam* and *Periya Puranam* commentaries in a press in Chennai appeared in *The Morning Star*. It stated that those who wished to get the copies of these works could send advance money and subscription to Arumugam, son of Kandar of Nallur, Jaffna. It also stated the progress of printing of these two works.³³ Advertisements about the printing of *Koyir Puranam* commentary and *Soundarya Lahari* commentary appeared in *The Morning Star*. It called for the advanced subscription of the copies and detailed the status of printing of those works. It was advertised by Arumukam, son of Kandar of Nallur.³⁴ Arumuka Navalar published *Periapuranam* in 1852 for which he started advertising and collecting subscriptions in advance from 1846. His editions of Saiva literary works were rendered in prose format meant for the learned as well as for commoners alike. In his edition of *Periapuranam* published in 1852, Navalar had written a detailed preface (*mukaurai*) describing the nature and importance of the work for the Saivites. However, he was not concerned about printing the work for the learned alone for he made explicitly clear that his editions were meant for commoners too. Since *Periapuranam* was held in high esteem by the Saiva Siddhanta teachers in Tamil tradition, Navalar considered it as an important work. He critiqued the learned pundits (*karravarkal*) for not paying adequate attention to *Periapuranam* and hence his urge to edit and publish the work not only for them but also for others (*marravarikal*).³⁵

The Saiva literary works edited and published by Arumuka Navalar were prescribed as textbooks in the school that he started in Vannarpannay. This is

evident from the series of polemical exchanges between Arumuka Navalar and the protestant missionaries published in the columns of *The Morning Star*. In a five parts article titled "Native Education", a representative of a Protestant missionary wrote fiercely against Arumuka Navalar highlighting the way in which he had used the print and the educational institution against the missionary schools. The author of the article argued that the syllabus prescribed in the Saiva school established by Navalar differed significantly from that of the missionary schools. By providing the readers with the details of the syllabus followed in the Saiva school established by Navalar, where his own published Saiva literary works were prescribed, the author had demonstrated the extent to which Navalar deviated from the syllabus prescribed by the missionaries.³⁶

Arumuka Navalar even made a petition to the state appealing for financial help to run his schools. However, the petition was turned down but the school thrived due to the support from the organization founded by the wealthy residents of Vannarpannay.³⁷ It is evident that Arumuka Navalar maintained active links with wealthy landlords and the Saiva Mutts in sustaining his editorial ventures and Saiva revival movement against the Protestant missionaries. Saiva matams in Tamilnadu wielded enormous wealth, power and prestige during the nineteenth century. Commenting on the wealth of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, Christopher Baker observes, 'At the turn of twentieth century, the Mutt held some 25,000 acres of Tinnevely, 1000 acres of Madurai and 3,000 acres of Tanjore. It controlled 130 subordinate mutts and possessed a library worth Rs. 30,000.'³⁸ Similarly, Dharmapura Atinam owned 25,000 acres in Tanjore district and some 12,500 acres outside of Tanjore, apart from controlling the affairs of 27 temples. Baker has underlined the enormous power of temples and Mutts in the localities in following terms,

Temples and mutts wielded remarkable economic and social power in the locality. Owning lands, commanding vast incomes, often controlling markets and credit dispensing valuable jobs and contracts, organizing festivals, patronizing art and learning, maintaining charities and regulating social status, the temples surprisingly were drawn into local politics.³⁹

Kathleen Iva Koppedrayar, in her study of the Vellala lineages of Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram and Tiruppantantal Saiva Mutts observes that, 'though the members of these centres are celibate ascetics, they control, through their institutions, vast wealth in land, immovable property, investments and so on. Much of this wealth is related to centres' administration of a network of temples of South India.'⁴⁰ Further with the

decision of the colonial state in 1863 to return the control and administration of religious institutions to the Indians, the power of these Mutts was restored. However, as Koppedrayar clarifies, the *atinams* (Mutts) were managers of endowments even before the British rule, at least from the time of its founding since sixteenth century. Apart from controlling vast tracts of wet and dry lands in and around their location, *atinams* were patronized by the lay followers especially the landowning class from the neighbouring Tinnelvely region. Commenting on Tiruvavatuturai *atinam*, Koppedrayar notes,

"It should be mentioned that Tiruvavatuturai also has a lay following. There is a network of Saiva Velala families who live mainly in the Tirunelveli District and who have had a hereditary affiliation with this centre."⁴¹

Similarly, the zamindars were involved in traditional modes of securing legitimacy in their localities which often involved pompous show of wealth and redistribution of resources. The integration of zaminadari areas into the British revenue administration after the Poligari wars and the subsequent demilitarization of the area resulted in the zamindars adopting traditional modes of securing legitimacy from the subjects of the locality. This involved enormous spending of money for the purposes of rituals in temples, festivals, and patronage to literature and arts. In this context, it is not surprising to note that the zamindars of Ramanathapuram and other areas were involved in extending patronage to the printing of literary works. They extended patronage not only to Arumuka Navalar but also to the *vidwans* of Tiruvavatuturai *Atinam*.⁴²

Patronage and the Publication of Sangam Literature

The third phase in the history of print and publishing of Tamil literature roughly begins from 1880. For the first time three major Tamil epics *Civakacintamani*, *Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai* were printed in full in the years 1887, 1892 and 1898 respectively by U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar. Two anthologies namely *Kalitokai* and *Purananuru* which were part of the Sangam literature, namely, *Ettuttokai* (eight anthologies) were printed in the years 1887 and 1894, respectively, by C.W. Damodaram Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar. *Pattupppattu* (Ten Songs) which is generally considered as part of the Sangam literature was printed in full for the first time with the commentary of Naccinarkinniyar in 1889 by U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar. Subsequently, other anthologies of *ettuttokai* namely *Aṅkurunuru* (1903), *Pattirrupattu* (1904), *Narrinai* (1915), *Kuruntokai* (1915), *Paripatal* (1918) and *Akananuru* (1918) were published by scholars like U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, V. Rajagopala Ayyangar, Pinnattur Narayanasamy Aiyar and

Sowriperumalarangan. These literary works published after 1880 were to radically alter the understanding of Tamil literary history, culture and civilization. Their antiquity was established by historical researches of scholars like P. Sundaram Pillai, S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, K.G. Sesha Aiyar and others. The trends in patronage to the publication of classical Tamil literary works shifted from the individual subscription to the institutional backing and support of the wealthy individuals.

Subscription as Patronage: First Editions

The first editions of classical Tamil literature were published beginning with *Kalittokai* in 1887. The editor/publishers of classics sought patronage to their publication through individual subscriptions well in advance before the actual publication of the work.

C.W. Damodaram Pillai in his preface to *Kalittokai* published on 30 November 1887 (500 copies were printed) mentions the following patrons for his publication project.⁴³

Raja Sir T. Madhavarayar – Rs. 100; Sir. C. Ramasamy Mutaliyar – Rs. 100; Honourable Justice A. Ramachandrayyer – Rs. 350; Honourable Rao Bahadur S.C. Subramaniayyer – Rs. 50; Honourable P. Senarayar – Rs. 10; Perur Zamindar Muthuvijaya Raghunatha Thumbaiyyasamy Thumbachi Naicker – Rs. 50; Urrumalai Zamindar Iruthalaya Maruthappa Devar – Rs. 100; Kumbakonam Sub-Court Judge D. Ganapathayyer – Rs. 20; Kumbakonam Sub-Court Vakil S. Raghava Iyengar – Rs. 25; Kumbakonam College Principal J.P. Pilterpeg – Rs. 20; Kumbakonam College language teacher S. Seshaiyer – Rs. 50; Colombo Supreme Court Justice P. Kumarasamy Mutaliyar – Rs. 25; Colombo Supreme Court Advocate Honourable P. Ramanatha Mutaliyar – Rs. 25; Matturai District Court Judge P. Arunachala Mutaliyar – Rs. 25; Jaffna Valikamam West maniam A. Raghunatha Mutaliyar – Rs. 20; Cikali Krishnasamy Mutaliyar – Rs. 20; Srimat. Tiruppanattalatinam Kumarasamy Tampiran – Rs. 50; Vitya Vicaranaik Karutar K. Nakojirayar – Rs. 30; Kavitalam Turaicamy Moopanar – Rs. 10; Rao Sahib Salem Ramasamy Mutaliyar – Rs. 20.

One is struck by the occupational background of the patrons and the networks Damodaram Pillai maintained with these people. He had earlier published the classical grammar like *Tolkappiyam Collatikaram* with the commentary of Cenavarayar, *Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram* with the commentary of Naccinarkiniyar, *Viracoliyam*, *Irayanar Akkapporul* and works like *Tituttanikai Puranam*. The copies of the printed texts remained unsold, and incurred him the loss of Rs. 3500. Pillai at one point almost

thought of giving up his efforts of printing the texts due to the losses he suffered. He wrote a letter in *The Hindu* appealing for help from Tamil scholars and traditional wealthy patrons, which yielded him no great result. However, he recounts that he could get back three-fourths of the money he suffered from loss.⁴⁴ In his edition of *Culamani*, a minor Tamil Jain epic, published in 1889, Damodaram Pillai informs us that Kamaraja Pandiya Nayakar, Zamindar of Bodinayakanur promised to bear the full printing cost of the epic. However, he received money from Tamil enthusiasts in Rangoon including his own brother Ilaya Tambi Pillai for the printing of *Culamani*. Subramania Deskiar, head of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, encouraged Pillai to print *Culamani* by providing him with a copy of palm-leaf manuscript donated to the library of the Mutt by Malavai Mahalinga Aiyar. Pillai also seems to have communicated to a number of people in Jain settlements in Tamilnadu, apart from requesting his friends to send palm-leaf manuscripts from Jain Mutt like the Sittamur Mutt.⁴⁵

For publishing *Tolkappiyam Eluttatikaram* in 1892 with the commentary of Naccinarkinniyar, Pillai depended on the material help extended by M. Annamalai Pillai, a Judge in a law court in Pudukkottai. Following his advertisement in *The Hindu* seeking material help from Tamil enthusiasts for his editions of Tamil classics, he received money from individuals of whom he acknowledged in the preface to the edition of *Kalittokai*. In this edition of *Tolkappiyam*, he refers to the advertisement he made in *The Hindu* and acknowledges the help of few individuals. Pammal Vijayaranga Mutaliyar, K. Britto, Kanakasabai Mudaliyar, Chindamani Velu Pillai, and I. Chinnaswamy Pillai were some of those who extended patronage to the editorial ventures of Damodaram Pillai. These men were English-educated graduates employed by the colonial state. Further in this edition, Pillai had given an advertisement about the availability of the editions that he had published before. The copies were made available at various places with individuals like N. K. Sadasiva Pillai of Vidyanupalana Yantra Salai, U. Muthukumarasamy Chettiar of Kalaratnakara Accukkutam, K. Ponnuswamy Pillai of Chidambaram Saiva Prakasa Vidyasalai, A. Kumaraswamy Pillai of Jaffna, T. Tiruvengada Pillai of Tanjore, and I. Onrayaka Gounder of Coimbatore.⁴⁶ Such wide network attests to the distribution of books published by editors of classics like Damodaram Pillai to various publishers, book distributors, Tamil scholars and patrons alike. Most importantly, Damodaram Pillai informed in the preface to this edition of *Tolkappiyam* that he planned to publish *Purananuru* and *Paripatal* apart from other works of *Ettuttokai*. He made an appeal to Tamil scholars to send him palm-leaf manuscripts of *Paripatal* and *Pattirruppattu*. Similarly in the preface to *Ilakkana Vilakkam* published in 1889, Damodaram Pillai acknowledges the financial help rendered by

Balasubramania Ragunatha Tondaiman, the Prince of Pudukkotai. He also thanked Ambalavana Desika Murthy, Subramania Desikar of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, Tamil scholar T. Kanakasundaram Pillai and publisher N.K. Sadasivam Pillai.⁴⁷ In the preface to the second edition of *Irayanar Akapporul* published in 1899, Damodaram Pillai mentioned that he was in the process of editing *Akananuru*. But it was never published by him in his lifetime. He informed the readers that an Englishman had promised to extend financial help for the printing of *Akananuru*.⁴⁸

The story of the difficulty in getting patronage for the printing of classical Tamil literature emerges in the prefaces of U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar, yet another successful editor of classical Tamil literary works. For instance, Swaminatha Aiyar recounted his difficulty in getting patronage for the project of editing *Civakacintamani*. Even before putting *Cintamani* into print, he secured market in the form of collecting signatures and money as advance. As early as 1881, i.e., six years prior to the printing of *Cintamani*, Aiyar collected signatures and money as advance for publishing the Tamil epic. In a letter to Aiyar by one M. Cevata Maraccayar dated 8 February 1881 we find him narrating his inability to find people who were ready to sign and offer money as advance for the printing of *Cintamani*.⁴⁹ In a preface to the first edition of *Cintamani* printed in 1887, Aiyar acknowledges the financial help rendered by various individuals from places like Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Kottur, Tiricirapuram, Jaffna, Chennapattanam, Tirunelveli, Urrumalai and Colan Malikai.⁵⁰

Aiyar edited *Pattupattu* in 1889, two years after printing in full the first edition of *Civakacintamani*. The first page of the printed edition alludes to the nature of patronage: "With the help of Sivagangai sub-division Ciruvayal Zamindar Muturamalinka Tevar, V. Swaminatha Aiyar has brought out of his research *Pattupattu* with the commentary of Naccinarkinniyar"

Aiyar maintained constant communication with Muturamalinka Tevar even after the printing of *Pattupattu*. In response to two letters of Aiyar, Muturamalinka Tevar sent a reply on 31 December 1890 encouraging him to print another Tamil epic *Cilappatikaram*.⁵¹ A year before the printing of *Pattupattu*, C.M. Swaminathan wrote to Aiyar from Chennai stating that he had received a letter from Ciruvayal Zamindar encouraging Aiyar's efforts in printing *Pattupattu*.⁵² A number of individuals seemed to have signed well in advance and paid for a printed copy of *Pattupattu*. Aiyar acknowledged the following names in his preface to the first edition of *Pattupattu* as those who had signed and paid well in advance for a printed copy of *Pattupattu*: Tirupatiriyur Sathu Seshaiyar; Tiruvavatuturai Ateenam Ambalavana Desikar; Madurai Deputy Collector M. Tillai Nayakam Pillai; Tanjore Jilla Court Vakil K.C. Srinivasa Pillai; Sivagangai sub-division Ciruvayal

Zamindar Muturamalinge Tevar; Colanmalikai Ratina Pillai.

Apart from these names, Aiyar also noted the fact that a number of others from Kumbakonam, Chennai, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tiruvananthapuram had also signed in advance for a printed copy of *Pattupattu*.⁵³ After printing the first edition of *Pattupattu* in 1889, Aiyar sent copies to his signatories and friends. The reviews of the printed editions were published in newspapers and magazines which further popularised to the public the news of the printing of Tamil classics. P. I. Chinnasamy Pillai wrote a review of the first edition of *Pattupattu* in *The Hindu* entitled "Historics" on 13 March 1890: Two days after the review appeared in *The Hindu*, Chinnasamy Pillai wrote to Aiyar informing him of review and appreciating his efforts.⁵⁴ Even before the printing of the first edition of *Pattupattu* in 1889, considerable amount of publicity was given to it in the form of appeals for donation and support. Thus in a write up dated 22 December 1888, Seshayer made an appeal to the public to support the printing of *Pattupattu* by Aiyar. It was endorsed by P. Sivaramier, who was then serving as the Deputy Inspector of Schools on 22 December 1888, P. Ranganatha Mutaliyar and V. Krishnamachariar on 1 January 1889, and M. Seshagiri Sastri on 2 January 1889.⁵⁵

In a letter dated 31 August 1889, T. Lakshmanan wrote an acknowledgement letter from Tiruvananthapuram to Aiyar of receiving eight copies of *Pattupattu*.⁵⁶ Similarly, in a letter dated 10 September 1889, P. Kumaraswamy wrote an acknowledgement letter from Colombo to Aiyar of receiving copies of *Pattupattu*.⁵⁷ In another letter dated 28 October 1889, T. Kumaraswamy Chetty acknowledged the copies of *Pattupattu* sent by Aiyar.⁵⁸ These private letters received by Aiyar are a testimony to the nexus he maintained with the Western educated middle class intellectuals and wealthy landed magnates.

The first edition of *Cilappatikaram* with the commentary of Atiyarkkunallar was published in 1892 by Aiyar, three years after the publication of the first edition of *Pattupattu* with Naccinarkinniyar's commentary. In fact, in the preface to the first edition of *Pattupattu*, Aiyar alludes to his intention of publishing *Cilappatikaram* in the near future. The patronage was hard to come by then but for the case of *Cilappatikaram* the material help was promised by Kumaraswamy Mutaliyar of Colombo. The first edition was published in 1892 with the financial help of Kumaraswamy Mutaliyar and others like Tiruvavatuturai Attenattu Ambalavana Desikar; Tiruvannamalai Ateenam Arumuka Desikar; Tirupanantat Kasimatatipati Swaminatha Ambiran; Kumaraswamy Mutaliyar of Colombo; K. Kalyanasundara Aiyar of Tanjore; Balasubramania Raghunatha Tondaiman of Pudukkottai; P.I. Chinnaswamy Pillai of Palakkad; V.L Ramanatha

Chettiar of Devikkottai; V.L. Chinnaya Chettiar; A.A. Ramaswamy Chettiar; A.S.S. Subramania Chettiar; V. V. Chandrinatha Chettiar.

It is interesting to note the role played by traditional Mutts in extending patronage for publishing classical texts.⁵⁹ In a letter from T.T. Kanakasundaram Pillai to Aiyar dated 31 August 1889, there is a reference to Aiyar's effort to publish *Cilappatikaram*. T.T. Kanakasundaram Pillai made a request to Aiyar to allow him to print a grammatical work *Yapparunkalam* since the latter was involved in the publishing work of *Cilappatikaram*.⁶⁰ There seems to have existed competition between T.T. Kanakasundaram Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar regarding the publication of Tamil literary works as these letters show. However, they seemed to have negotiated through correspondence and helped each other to overcome the competitive urge.

Aiyar published the first edition of *Purananuru* in 1894. The financial help for the publication of *Purananuru* was extended by Ciruvayal Zamindar Muthuramalinga Tevar, A. Ramanatha Chettiar and K. Sundarama Aiyar. Aiyar was not alone in printing *Purananuru* at the end of the nineteenth century. In a letter received by Aiyar from Krishnan on 20 April 1890, the latter allude to Pillai (Damodaram Pillai) making efforts to publish *Purananuru*. He urged Aiyar to print *Purananuru* along with *Cilappatikaram* before Pillai could take up the work although he feared about the cost of printing both the work at a time when patronage was hard to come by.⁶¹ It appears from the private correspondence of Aiyar with various individuals that Damodaram Pillai indeed made efforts to publish *Purananuru* at a time when Aiyar too was involved in editing the text. This is clear from a letter that Damodaram Pillai himself wrote to Aiyar on 12 May 1893 where Pillai requested Aiyar to ask him directly regarding the palm-leaf manuscript copy of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam instead of approaching him through the staffs of the Mutt. Pillai wrote the following to Aiyar,

I would be happy if you could approach me directly to get the Atinam manuscript copy of *Purananuru* instead of approaching me through the staffs of the Mutt. Did you fear that I would step back if you ask me? I don't see any reason for such a fear."⁶²

In yet another letter dated 14 August 1893 C.W. Damodaram Pillai wrote to Aiyar about the palm-leaf manuscript copy of *Purananuru* that belonged to Tiruttanikai Saravanapperumal Aiyar.⁶³ Even Kanakasabhai Pillai seems to have understood the competition that existed between Damodaram Pillai and Swaminatha Aiyar. In a letter dated 19 August 1888, Kanakasabhai Pillai wrote to Swaminatha Aiyar requesting him to negotiate with Damodaram Pillai to come to a consensus regarding the publication of ancient Tamil literary

works. He has stated the fact in the letter that both Aiyar and Damodaram Pillai had requested him to send same manuscript copies of ancient Tamil literary works.⁶⁴ After printing *Purananuru* in 1894, Aiyar sent copies to number of wealthy individuals. On 14 November 1894, after receiving a printed copy of *Purananuru*, Panditurai Tevar, Zamindar of Palavanattam, wrote an acknowledgement letter to Aiyar. In fact a few weeks after sending this letter, Panditurai Devar visited Tiruvavatuturai Atinam. The head of the Mutt Ambalavana Desikar informed Swaminatha Aiyar to visit the Mutt to meet Panditurai Devar. After enquiring Aiyar's future ventures into the world of publications, Panditurai Devar left to Ramaniathapuram Samastanam. On 17 December 1894, Aiyar received from Panditurai Devar a letter with Rs. 500 as compliment. The Ambalavana Desikar, the head of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam also offered Rs. 300 to Aiyar after hearing from him the gift offered by Panditurai Devar. It was at the instance of Panditurai Devar that the Madurai Tamil Sangam was started in 1901.⁶⁵

Swaminatha Aiyar printed the first edition of *Manimekalai* in 1898. The edition consisted of 1000 copies. The title of the edition reads the following: "With the help of Palavanattam Zamindar Ramanathapuram Sri Pantiturai Tevar, Swamintha Aiyar, Tamil Pundit of Kumbakonam College has brought out Manimekalai authored by Kulavanican Cattamar, one of the poet of Kataicankam of Madurai."

In *Mukaurai* to the first edition of *Manimekalai*, Aiyar elaborate further on the financial help rendered by not only Pantitturai Tevar but also by Muturamalinka Tevar and Ciruvayal Zamindar of Civakankai. Aiyar also informs us that during his trips to Chennai for his editorial work of *Manimekalai*, he was provided lodging in the palatial house of U.V.K. Rajagopalachari, a Vakil of the Madras High Court. It is clear from Aiyar's autobiography that he was not alone in editing and printing *Manimekalai*. In fact, in 1894, *Manimekalai* (500 copies) was published by M. Shanmugan Pillai, a Tamil *pundit* from Tirumayilai without any commentary. In 1894, Murugesu Chettiar also published *Manimekalai*. T.T. Kanakasundaram Pillai wrote a letter to Aiyar criticizing the edition of M. Shanmugan Pillai by highlighting the errors in it.⁶⁶ After Aiyar brought out the first edition in 1898 with his own commentary, tributes poured in from various quarters. V.K. Suryanarayana Sastri who then was serving as Tamil teacher at the Madras Christian College praised the efforts of Aiyar. So too a review article on *Manimekalai* published in *Viveka Tivakaran* on 7 March 1899.⁶⁷

Aiyar published 500 copies of the first edition of *Ainkurunuru* on 30 July 1903. Even before the edition of *Ainkurunuru* was published by Aiyar, an advertisement was inserted in *Ggana Bodhini* detailing the progress of the printing of the work. In the advertisement note, the editor informed the

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readers about the progress of publishing *Ainkurunuru* by Swaminatha Aiyar. It makes an appeal to the Tamil scholarly community to get copies of *Ainkurunuru* once it is printed. In the preface to *Ainkurunuru*, Aiyar dedicated the work to Thyagaraca Chettiar who offered a teaching position to him at the Kumbakonam Government College. In fact, Thyagaraca Chettiar was a student of Mahavidwan Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai at the Tiruvavatuturai Atinam before himself taking the position of teaching Tamil at the Kumbakonam Government College. The influence of Atinam in securing jobs for its students even in secular educational establishments of the colonial state is amply clear from the appointment of Swaminatha Aiyar as a teacher of Tamil at the Kumbakonam Government College. K. Sundarama Aiyar, lecturer of History at the Kumbakonam Government College, extended financial help to Aiyar for the printing of *Ainkurunuru*. Pinnatur Narayanaswamy Aiyar who edited *Narrinai* ably assisted Aiyar in the publication of *Ainkurunuru*, apart from few other individuals whom Aiyar simply referred to as Tamil enthusiasts.

Towards the Second Editions of Classics and the Changing Nature of Patronage

Unlike Tamil novels of the late nineteenth century, the publication of the second editions of classical Tamil literature took considerable time. The intervening years between the first and second editions of classics was a period during which the popularity of the editors kept growing. It was also a period during which the editors of the classics expanded and consolidated their patron networks. The second edition of *Civakacintamani* was published by Swaminatha Aiyar in 1907 twenty years after the publication of the first edition. Similarly, the second editions of *Pattuppattu*, *Cilappatikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Ainkurunuru* were published in years 1918, 1920, 1921 and 1920 respectively with the time gap of more than twenty years (except for *Ainkurunuru*) from the date of the publication of first editions of these works. The nature of patrons for these second editions changed from the individual subscribers to land holding zamindars and wealthy institutions associated with them like Saiva monasteries and Madurai Tamil Sangam. One is struck by the tone of repetition as far as the patrons were concerned in the prefaces for the second editions of the classical Tamil literary works published by Swaminatha Aiyar. The Sethupathis of Ramanathapuram, presidents of the Madurai Tamil Sangam, Tiruvavatuturai monastery and the members of the Madras Law Board figured as patrons for the second editions of the classics published by Swaminatha Aiyar.

The fact that Aiyar acknowledged the financial help of the Madurai Tamil Sangam in the publication of the second editions of not only

Cilappatikaram but also of *Civaka Cinatamani*, *Pattupattu* and many other works is not surprising given the importance of Tamil learning and activities that the Madurai Tamil Sangam sought to represent in public. As early as 1893, Baskara Setupati, son of Muthuramalinga Setupati, recorded in his personal diary of his intention to start a Tamil Sangam in Madurai among others. His close associate Panditurai Tevar, son of Ponnuswamy Tevar showed keen interest in the publication of old Tamil literary works. He extended financial help to Swaminatha Aiyar in the printing of *Manimekalai* and *Purapporul Venpa Malai* which Aiyar had recorded in the prefaces he wrote for those works and in his autobiography. Baskara Setupati and Panditurai Tevar were not new to this enterprise of Tamil enthusiasm from the Ramanathapuram Zaminadari area. Muthuramalinga Setupati, father of Baskara Setupati, was known for his Tamil learning and ability to compose Tamil poems. Through his elder brother Ponnuswamy Tevar, Muthuramalinga Setupati extended financial help for the printing of old Tamil literary works. He is known for patronizing Tillaiaimpur Chandrasekara Kavirayar in the compilation of the scattered individual verses into an anthology *Tanippatal Tirattu*. Most significantly, he patronized Arumuka Navalar of Jaffna in the printing of *Tirukkural* (with the commentary of Parimelakar), *Tirukkovaïyarurai*, *Setupṛanam*, *Illakkana-kottu*, *Illakkana Vilakkaccuravali* and *Tarukka Cankirakam*. Patronage was one of the means through which Zamindars of Ramanathapuram sought to secure legitimacy for their control over the area. Ramanathapuram was made a zamindari revenue settlement by the East India Company in 1803 under the pact that ruling lineage had to pay the annual revenue of Rs. 3,20,000 as *peshkash* to the Company in return for the protection of their royalty by the Company. What followed was an intense family struggle among Setupatis in claiming the control over the zamindari. Although the contenders for the zaminadari right resorted to the legal system introduced by the British in the form of filing series of court cases, they did not altogether leave out the traditional means of securing legitimacy which were profoundly local in character. Thus, as late as 1916, the Raja of Ramnad sought permission from the Director of Public Instruction to award Rs. 100 to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar for his contribution to Tamil language and literature on the occasion of the Dasara festival celebrated at the royal house of Ramanathapuram.⁶⁸ The Dussera festival was a grand occasion at the Royal court of Ramanathapuram as scholars, *pundits*, musicians, and artists were honoured with gifts. The colonial state too was conscious of this peculiar kind of local legitimacy that Rajah of Ramanathapuram sought in his Zamindari by upholding the traditional rituals. Thus, while forwarding the letter of Rajah of Ramnad by the J.H. Stone, Director of Public Instruction, Madras to the Secretary to the

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government of Madras, Educational department an attention was drawn to similar occasion five years back when Rajah sought the permission of government to award a pair of golden bangles and a shawl to Swaminatha Aiyar on the occasion of Dussera festival at Ramanathapuram.⁶⁹

On 7 September 1911, J.H. Stone wrote the following to the Secretary to the Government of Madras, Educational department:

The Rajah of Ramnad states that on the occasion of the Dussera celebrations every year it has been the *custom in his principality from a remote past* to invite to the Durbar in his palace well-known poets and eminent Pandits of high scholarship and to reward them suitably after holding discourses on topics of literary and dialectical interest, that he proposes to signify his appreciation of the splendid services of Pandit Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminatha Aiyar, Tamil Master, presidency College, in the cause of Tamil literature on the appropriate occasion of the ensuing Dussera festivities this month by presenting him with Thodas (a pair of golden bangles) and a shawl and requests that the above Pandit may be permitted to accept the presents in question.⁷⁰ (emphasis added).

In his autobiography, Swaminatha Aiyar gives a graphic account of Dussera festival celebrated at the royal house of Ramanathapuram and hence worth quoting in detail:

On that year I received an invitation from Sri Baskara Setupati to attend the Navarathri festival. I took leave for ten days from the college and took a bullock cart to Ramanathapuram after getting down at Madurai. On the way there were vehicles carrying tons of goods. Unable to bear the weight wheels broke for many of them. I realized the importance of Navarathri celebration at Ramanathapuram after seeing the marching of vehicles in that direction. Hundreds of scholars from Tamilnadu and other places arrived for the occasion. It has to be said that not even a single scholar was left out in Tamilnadu. There was no place for the crowd. The price of commodities multiplied many times.⁷¹

The event represented the coming together of poets, patrons, and people whose implications are manifold in the traditional political set up.

It is interesting to note how Swaminatha Aiyar could use relationship with reputed individuals to further his cause for printing the classics. The perfect example is more than a decade long correspondence he maintained with GU Pope. At the turn of twentieth century, Swaminatha Aiyar requested GU Pope to recommend him to the colonial state for a grant, which would help him to overcome the financial loss, suffered because of printing Tamil

literary works in the past. This can be gathered from a reply letter that GU Pope wrote to Swaminatha Aiyar on 8 November 1904. Pope writes,

I am writing by this mail to Mr. Mayhew, Inspector of Schools, who is a valued friend, and the son of valued friend of mine. It is possible that he may show the Director of Public Instruction what I have written. I am not personally acquainted with Dr. Bourne. You must not be discouraged by want of recognition for your works.⁷²

It is clear from the account of Pope that Swaminatha Aiyar sought grant from the colonial state through GU Pope's recommendation. On more than one occasion Swaminatha Aiyar seems to have written letters to the Director of Public Instruction seeking financial help to print Tamil literary works. In one undated letter found in his private papers, Swaminatha Aiyar seems to have written a letter to the Director of Public Instruction G.H. Stuart.⁷³

We also found a letter dated 13 March 1905 sent by Aiyar to the Director of Public Instruction, A.G. Bourne, through the Principal of Presidency College appealing for financial grant.⁷⁴

This letter was accompanied by documents which included various opinions about Swaminatha Aiyar's editions by G.U. Pope, Salem Ramaswamy Mutaliar, P. Kumaraswamy Mutaliyar, and reviews in *The Hindu* newspaper. However, for a colonial administrator, the recommendations of G.U. Pope and Julien Vinson were important than that of others. H.D. Taylor, while forwarding the above letter of Swaminatha Aiyar to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, stated the following:

It is stated that Julien Vinson has made use of Swaminatha Aiyar's works in bringing out abbreviated French translations of Tamil classics, that Dr. Pope of Oxford has also utilized them for various essays on topics relating to the ancient Tamil land and its people, that the University of Madras has prescribed some of them as examination textbooks and that Professor Vinson and Dr. Pope have made ample and most gratifying acknowledgements of the value of Swaminatha Aiyar's labours.⁷⁵

The colonial state did ultimately confer on him a grant of Rs. 1000 as honorarium for his contribution to Tamil literature. What is interesting to note in this whole story is the central importance given to G.U. Pope by both the colonial state as well as Swaminatha Aiyar himself. The fact that Aiyar had to invoke Pope and Vinson in his request letter to the colonial state points to the importance Pope and Vinson commanded in the minds of native scholars. However, in the context of nationalism this was not always the case. When the colonial state entrusted the compilation of a lexicon of Tamil with

G.U. Pope with a huge sum of money in 1906, the nationalists opposed the proposal. *Swadesamitran* carried an article condemning the colonial state for appointing a foreigner to compile a lexicon of Tamil at a time when there were accomplished Tamil scholars like Swaminatha Aiyar.⁷⁶

Summary

We have detailed with evidence so far the presence of the 'social' in the history of the reproduction of classical Tamil literature during nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial Tamilnadu. However the texture of the 'social' that we have mapped needs to be elaborated as a way of conclusion. The military conquest and establishment of political rule in South India with the administrative headquarters at Madras by the British East India Company at the end of eighteenth century reconstituted the Tamil literary culture and nature of patronage. The founding of the College of Fort St. George in 1812 and the appointment of Tamil *pundits* as Head Masters of the College created not only a partial displacement of the literary culture from traditional centres like Tanjore and Madurai but also formed a network between the administrative capital and traditional Mutts like Tiruvavatuturai Atinam. Chennai Kalvi Sangam, as the college of Fort St. George came to be known in Tamil scholarly circles, was perceived by Tamil *pundits* of the time as a centre for the revival of Tamil learning on the model of ancient Tamil Sangam. A. Muttuswamy Pillai, a Tamil scholar and manager of the College of Fort St. George, made an interesting contrast between the Madras Sangam founded by the Company and the Madurai Sangam founded in ancient times by Pandian chiefs in his biography of Jesuit Father Beschi. 'Chennai Kalvi Sangattu Vidwan' or 'Chennai Kalvi Sangattu Tamil Pulavar' was a title conferred to the Tamil head masters of the College and the *pundits* like Tandavaraya Mutaliyar, Madurai Kantasamy Pulavar, Chidambara Pandaram, A. Muttusamy Pillai were identified as such by their colleague *pundits* in other traditional centres. The colonial masters were perceived as 'Mempatta Durai Avargal' (esteemed masters) by the traditional Tamil *pundits* both inside and outside of the College. Almost all Tamil *pundits* associated with the College of Fort St. George hailed from upper non-Brahman castes. They maintained links with dominant landholding Mutts like Tiruvavatuturai Atinam and remained influential in Tamil learning circles. At the instance of Ellis, A. Muttusamy Pillai was sent out to southern districts to collect palm-leaf manuscripts for the college collection. A network was created between land holding Saiva Mutts like Tiruvavatuturai Atinam and the College. Despite the coming together of the Company and *pundits*, the intellectual activity was confined to the production and printing of grammars and dictionaries. Hardly any classical Tamil literary work was

published at the premises of the College of Fort St. George. The government patronage was extended to the publication of grammars and dictionaries which suited their immediate need.

The second phase of the history of printing that stretched from 1830s to 1870s saw the proliferation of native printers in and around Madras who started printing Tamil literary works. The Virasaiva brothers – Visakapperumalaiyar and Saravanapperumal Aiyars – basing their head quarters at Kalvivilakka Accukkudam printed Tamil literary works till 1860. They found readership in the city of Madras for their publications and widely circulated their printed works among traditional scholarly community. Government patronage to the indigenous printers was totally absent and it was through their own efforts the printers ran their business. Maintaining contacts with Tamil *pundits* was very essential to sell the books. The indigenous printers could successfully market their works through advertisements in the book itself. The indigenous printers/publishers published medieval grammars like *Nannul* and literary works like *Tirukkural*, *Nalatiyar*, *Tevaram*, *Nalayira Divya Prabhandam*, *Naitatam*, *Tirumuruk-karruppatai*, and innumerable medieval *puranas* and *prabhandams*. None of the major Tamil epics was printed during this period although they were known and read widely in palm-leaf manuscript form. No Sangam work was printed except *Tolkappiyam Eluttatikaram* by Malavai Mahalingaiyar in 1847.

The Saiva revival movement that begun in Jaffna against the activities of protestant missionaries provided a major impetus to the printing of classical Tamil literature. It was exemplified in the life and activities of Arumuka Navalar. He was patronized by wealthy landlords of Wannarpanny region in Jaffna and also Ramanathapuram Zamindars and Tiruvavatuturai Atinam in Tamilnadu. Although Navalar printed number of Saivite Tamil literature, he also planned to bring out number of non-Saiva literary works as clear from the list of works he presents in the advertisement of *Tirukkovaiyar* edition. However, the Saiva revival movement in nineteenth century Tamilnadu was not homogenous. Navalar had differences with Ramalinga Adigal and the followers of the latter attacked the disciples of Arumuka Navalar. This was reflected in the sphere of printing history as well. C.W. Damodaram Pillai was contested by Narasingapuram Veerasamy Mutaliyar, Komalapuram Rajagopala Pillai and Toluvur Velayuda Mutaliyar in the printing of *Tolkappiyam Collatikaram* with the commentary of Cenavarayar. The three Tamil *pundits* who contested Damodaram Pillai were the followers of Ramalinga Adigal who were profoundly against Arumuka Navalar and his disciples. The tussle between the followers of Navalar continued with U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar as well in the last two decades of nineteenth century. The emergence of Tamil journalism provided a new avenue for the advertisement

of printed Tamil literary works. Navalar placed advertisement in *The Morning Star* about his publications and so too C.W. Damodaram Pillai in *Tināvartanamani*. The colonial state neither extended patronage to the indigenous printers nor published any Tamil literary works of classical merit. Henry Bower published a translation of *Nannul* and a chapter of *Civakacintamani* in 1868 under the patronage of the Director of Public Instruction. But apart from this rare instance, the state remained confined to the production and printing of Tamil grammars and dictionaries for pedagogical purposes.

From 1870s, the Ramanathapuram zamindars, and the English educated indigenous middle class mostly working in the apparatus of the colonial state and traditional Saiva mutts started promoting the printing of classical Tamil literary works. In almost all the prefaces to the published classical Tamil literature, U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar and Damodaram Pillai acknowledged the financial help rendered by one or the other of this group. At the initial stage, these scholars faced the problem of getting patronage but they successfully overcame the problem by adopting strategies like securing advance subscriptions and establishing networks with wealthy individuals. The third and the final phase of the history of printing in nineteenth century with roughly begun from 1870s saw the publication of Tamil epics, literary works like *Purananuru*, *Kalittokai*, *Pattuppattu* and by the beginning of twentieth century works like *Ainkurunuru*, *Patirrupattu*, *Akananuru*, *Narrinai*, *Paripatal*, and *Kuruntokai* were published. In all these publications the financial help rendered by Ramanathapuram Zamindars, Tiruvavatuturai Atinam and the English educated middle class was considerable. We cannot associate any particular caste patronage for the printing of these literary works. The patrons were wealthy individuals, mostly dominant landholders. They participated in this economy of literary production and printing under the collective category *Tamil ulagam*. At the end the success of the editor like U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar depended on not only the quality of the editions of classics but also the ability to secure effective patronage. The private correspondence that Aiyar maintained with number of wealthy individuals amply underscores his ability to secure effective patronage for his editorial activities. There could have been no *Tamil Thaha* (grandfather of Tamil) without the financial help from *Tamil ulagam* (Tamil world) which largely comprised of wealthy individuals.

This paper is a modified version of the paper presented by the author at an International Conference on 'Indo-Nepal Nepal-Indo migration in the context of South Asian mobility patterns April 3-4, 2010 organized by Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, in collaboration with the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark.

Notes

- 1 For relying on U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar's autobiography to understand the reconstitution of nineteenth century Tamil literary canon and literary culture, see A.R. Venkatachalapathy, "Enna Prayocanam?" Constructing the Canon in Colonial Tamilnadu', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42, 4, 2005, pp. 535-553; Norman Cutler, 'Three Moments in the Genealogy of Tamil Literary Culture' in Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003, pp. 271-288; For placing the emphasis on U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar and C.W. Damodaram Pillai for the 'rediscovery' of classical Tamil literature, see K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism 1905-1944*, Madurai, 1980, pp. 15-20; Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969, pp. 281-282.
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- 28 K. Kailasapathy, *Navalar Parri Kailasapathy*, Kumaran Puthaga Illam, Chennai, 2005; K. Sivathamby, "Tamilil Illakiya Pata Mitpu" in Perumal Murugan, (ed.), *U. Ve. Sa. Panmukā Alu mayin Perruvam*, Kalachuvadu Pathipagam, Nagercoil, 2005, pp. 103-139.
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- 31 The title pages of the editions of *Tirukkōvayar*, *Tirukkural* and *Cetuppuranam* by Arumuka Navalar mentions the request made by Ponnusamy Tevar of Ramanathapuram Zaminadari for the printing of these works. Similarly the title page of Arumuka Navalar's *Ilakkana Vilakka Curavali* published in 1866 mentions the order of Subramania Tecikar of Tiruvavatuturai Atinam to print the work. See also Pūlavār Ira. Ilankumaran, *Maturai Nankam Tamil Cankam*, Madurai, 1987, pp. 27-28.
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- 36 For first report titled "Native Education - I" see *The Morning Star*, 9 June 1853, Volume XIII, Number 11, p. 46. For "Native Education - 2" see *The Morning Star*, 23 June 1853, Volume XIII, Number 12, p. 49. For "Native Education - 3" see *The Morning Star* of the same issue p. 52. For "Native Education - 4" see *The Morning Star*, 28 July 1853, Volume XIII, Number 14, p. 59. For "Native Education - 5" see *The Morning Star*, 11 August 1853, Volume XIII, Number 51, p. 63. This series of articles represent the antagonism between Navalar's school and the missionary initiatives.
- 37 There is a news report criticizing the initiative of Arumuka Navalar in starting a school at Wannarpānnay. It argues that wealthy men of Wannarpānnay formed an organization and started patronizing the school started by Arumuka Navalar. There is also a news report regarding the formation of Wannarpānnay organization by the residents of Wannarpānnay. See *The Morning Star*, June 23 1853, Volume. XIII, Number. 12, pp. 49-50.
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- 49 Letter dated 08/02/1881 from M. Cevata Maraccayar from Nagore to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume C, pp. 53-54. The compilation of the unpublished private correspondence of U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar is found in four volumes A to D of *Tamilkkaruvoolum* at U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar Library in Besant Nagar, Chennai.
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- 51 Letter dated 31/12/1890 from Muthuramalinga Tevar to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 183-184. This is a reply from Muthuramalinga Tevar for the two letters of Aiyar dated 15th and 17th (month is not mentioned) in which Aiyar communicated his intention to publish another Tamil epic *Cilappatikaram* to Tevar.
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- 54 Letter dated 15/03/1890 from P.I. Chinnaswamy Pillai to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 220-221
- 55 *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 370-379.
- 56 Letter dated 31/08/1889 from T. Lakshmanan to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 134-136.

- 57 Letter dated 10/09/1889 from P. Kumaraswamy from Colombo to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 140-141.
- 58 Letter dated 28/10/1889 from T. Kumaraswamy Chetty to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 147.
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- 64 Letter dated 19/08/1888 from T. Kanakasabhai Pillai from Tirunelveli to U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume C, pp. 155-156.
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- 73 Letter from U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar to G.H. Stuart, Director of Public Instruction (undated), *Tamilkkaruvoolum*, Volume D, pp. 260-264.
- 74 Application letter from U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar to The Director of Public Instruction through the Principal, Presidency College dated 13/03/1905, G.O. 600-601, 06/09/1905, Education Department, Tamilnadu State Archives.
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Book Review

Hart, K. Laville, J-L and A.D. Cattani, *The Human Economy*, Polity Press: Cambridge and Massachusetts, 2010

'Neoliberalism has been wounded, but it is not yet defeated,' say Keith Hart and his co-authors. Their call for a human economy project is a reassertion that, unlike the dominant paradigm that views human beings as the ultimate *homo economicus* operating under a mechanised framework of rational choice, economy is made and remade by people's actions as social beings, and that the fine balance between an individual's need for self-reliance and belonging to others must be brought back to contemporary economic thinking.

In what should be an essential reading for scholars engaging with the philosophy of economics, Hart et. al. highlight three facets of neoliberalism. First, the economic doctrine that evolved very much as an Anglophone phenomenon now openly claims universal application. This volume emerges out of a realisation that the non-Anglophone economic thoughts from France, Latin and South America, and Scandinavia – often lost in translation in the increasingly anglicised world – needs to be brought back to global mainstream. Second, the financial crisis made it clear it for all to see how hyped were the notions of 'free market' superiority. For millennia, economy was conceived of in domestic terms as 'household management,' of personal incomes, expenses, servants, loans and repayments. Its overstretched usage to apply the principle nationally became untenable during the financial meltdown when the "financial 'masters of the universe' quickly brought out the begging bowl and in some cases had to suffer nationalisation," and the governments who once preached the wisdom of free-market desperately embraced Keynesian remedies incurring inflationary risks. Third, linked to the rise and fall of the geographic and ideological hegemonies, Hart et. al. call for the need for building a global civil society, rising above the socialist-capitalist divide, and drawing on the work of the great intellectuals like Mohandas K. Gandhi, Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James who aspired to make their own independent relationship to the colonialism of the twentieth century.

What is proposed is a new 'new institutional economics' to be formed out of anthropology, sociology, political economy, economic philosophy and world history. It is the product of an extended international collaboration

that cuts across not only disciplines but also geography and language. The *Human Economy* traces its origin at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and draws on two earlier publications – *a outra economia* by Cattani (2003) in Spanish and the idea of *economie solidaire* by Jean-Louis Laville (1997) in French, not to mention Keith Hart's (1973) seminal work on informal economy in English. On offer is thirty two chapters organised in five broad headlines of: world society, human face of an economy, moral politics, society-economy embeddedness, and new directions of technology, ecology and emancipation.

What is globalisation? One aspect of globalisation is an unprecedented rise of world-wide networks that heighten possibilities of collaboration in all walks of life. But globalisation has not necessarily worked for the poor, nor has it worked for the environment. Golub and Parechal rightly attribute this to the missing global public goods. These cannot be produced through capitalist market mechanisms; they call for a new architecture of global governance that respects democracy both in structure and in spirit. The existing architectures have shifted their focus from development to neoliberalism, echoing the paradigm shift in the world order from the East-West conflict of the Cold War to a North-South divide, as is manifested most explicitly in the Washington Consensus (Merrien and Mendy). The word 'development' itself has turned into a label for political relations between rich and poor countries after colonial empire. As the former shirk its responsibility in the latter's enrichment, development has turned into a polemic that legitimises the reproduction of inequality across the globe. An alternative proposed is what Pleyers calls 'alter-globalisation' that critiques the neoliberal impositions in three forms: through citizens' and experts' advocacy networks, renewed calls for local actions, and lending of moral support to progressive regimes around the world.

The *Human Economy's* call for action is also a call for revisiting economics as theory. Who could argue against the aim of putting our common affairs on a rational footing? In a century long history of development, however, where prudence has come to trump economics, reflection of trends must lead to a critical debate on theory. Human actions span between the two poles of meaning: One the atomic rationality with which he mobilises scarce resources for unlimited needs, and the other, camaraderie with which he subscribes or resists the broader social equations. Neoclassical understanding of the term 'economic' only in its former sense is conceptually erroneous and its practice runs the risk of undermining democracy and provoking a social reaction. There are several fronts where this danger is prominent: ecology, feminism, fair trade and social entrepreneurship, labour, microcredit and informal economy. The answer must take a form of economic pluralism as political and social.

Section III continues the line that economic thinking either needs redefinition or underplaying. For example, how does the idea of citizenship and welfare reconcile the idea of economic supremacy over political? Is corporate social responsibility a neoliberal victory that blurs the distinction between states and corporations, thus legitimising one set of citizens superior to others on the grounds of wealth? Caille's discussion of 'gift' again picks up the inadequacy of market principles in explaining the human economy. The point of Mauss's seminal essay written just under a century ago on this topic was that economic transactions have inherent social logic behind them. Gifts are self-interested but they also carry certain reason of alliance and disinterestedness. The anti-utilitarian paradigm inherent here may support the idea of *économie solidaire* which underscores the plurality of interests over both atomic profit motive and universal class action (Jean-Louis Laville). Gift undermines clear-cut oppositions between pure charity and self-interest, or between the market and the association. The gift paradigm also implies that the dialectical continuities that exist between the two may also be inverted. In this sense, a society is never a complete construction, instead it evolves from a bootstrapping process of making and remaking the meaning.

Hann offers ethnographic evidences on this: He brings up Malinowski's account of Trobriand Islanders in the context of Thompson's account of English workers. Both the accounts refute Adam Smith's bifurcation of economy and morality as well as the Marxist utopia of class solidarity. Further, how are we to make sense of the Indian caste system which evidently places merchants below kings and priests? This complex division of labour is prescribed and maintained on the basis of ritual purity even though India has historically been a fiercely competitive society. It is true that this ancient hierarchy has undergone substantial changes today but caste ideology continues to exercise a certain hegemony that is not necessarily in conflict with the profit motive among the Indians.

While this book collectively defines substantive deficit as a major obstacle to humanising economics, a straightforward answer is not deducted from the varied chapters, except for the assertion that substantivisation of the formal is a process that is essentially local and self-reliant one. Such a search and analytical process may resemble bootstrapping where societies must have inductive freedom to find their own balance between prudence and morality, and develop an economic framework that they own. Such a process must emancipate the theory of economics from atomic rationalisation of human beings, and release the methodological, geographic and linguistic hegemonies. The book suitably ends by charting out new directions for engagement.



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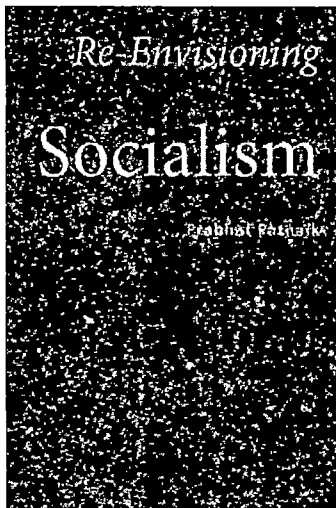
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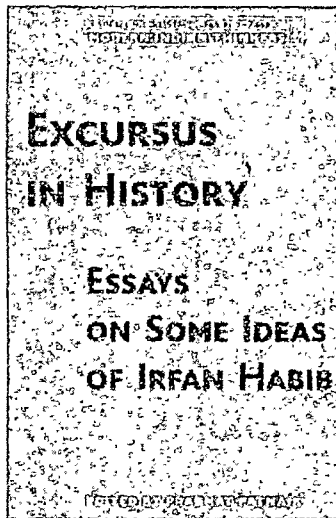
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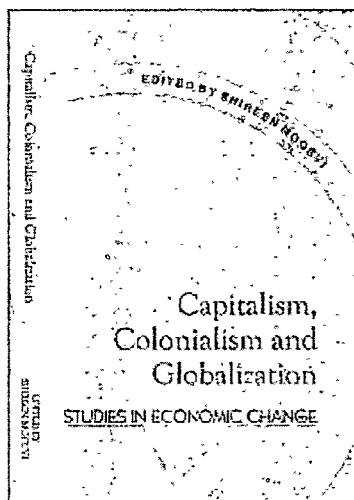
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An Early Communist
Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta 1913–1929

by Suchetana Chattopadhyay

May 2011 • 316 pages • 9.5 x 6.25 inches • HB • ISBN: 978-81-89487-77-5 • Rs 575

From an occasionally employed, lower middle-class Bengali Muslim intellectual on the borderline of starvation in the city, he was to become 'the chief accused' at the Meerut communist trials started by the colonial government in 1929. What was the road travelled before challenging imperialism 'from the dock'? In 1913, Muzaffar Ahmad (1889–1973) was just one more individual adrift in the sea of migrants arriving from rural Bengal to Calcutta. His ambition was to be a writer. Yet in the vortex of metropolitan upheavals, his life would take a completely different turn. Taking Muzaffar Ahmad's early career (1913–29) as its chronological frame, this book examines the dialectical interplay between social being and a wider social consciousness in late colonial Bengal which drew a section of Muslim intellectuals to communism. Muzaffar's life converged with a significant phase in the social and political history of India and the world: 1913 marked the eve of the First World War, while the Wall Street stockmarket crash set off the Great Depression in 1929. During this period, especially after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, socialist ideas and communist activism became politically familiar in different parts of the globe. In the post-First World War climate, many alienated urban intellectuals from Cairo to Shanghai stood at the crossroads of established identities and radical currents. Informed by working-class protests from below and a leftward turn in the literary/cultural fields, many in India were also moving away from the political routes open to those from their social background to combat colonialism and identifying with alternative visions of decolonization.

By tracing this process in the context of Calcutta through Muzaffar Ahmad's transitions, the little investigated history of the left in Bengal prior to Meerut is unravelled, and is related to the convergences between individual radicalization and the emergence of a new political space in a colonial city. The connected histories of communism, port-cities, Bengal Muslims, workers, intellectuals, youth, migration, colonial intelligence, early left organization, radical prose, local/regional activism and internationalist currents are also probed in this context.

Suchetana Chattopadhyay teaches history at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She studied at Jadavpur University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and has published articles in *South Asia Research* and *History Workshop Journal*.



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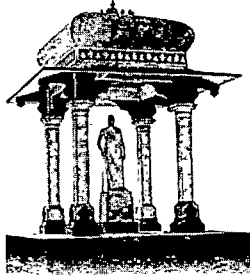
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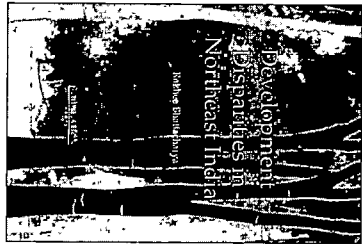
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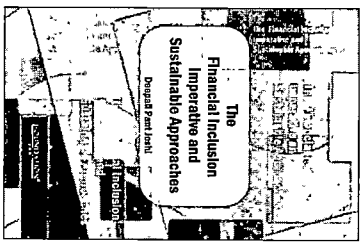


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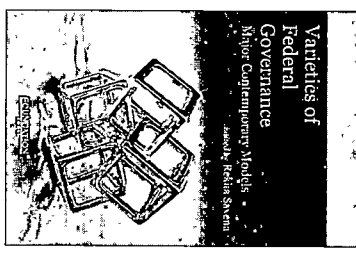


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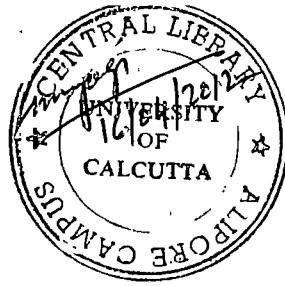
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Editorial

This issue of the *Social Scientist* focuses on some diversities related to the world of history. As has been our consistent endeavour, we bring to our readers the work of established historians as well as the fresh work of young researchers. The first article, 'Knowledge Transmission: Processes, Contents and Apparatus in Early India', is by one of India's leading historians – Professor K.M. Shrimali. This was originally presented as a paper at the Seventy-first Session of the Indian History Congress, held at Malda (West Bengal) earlier this year. Drawing upon both literary and epigraphic sources, the author delineates different features associated with the manner in which knowledge was located, highlighting its intimate association with power and the structure of its transmission in early India. As discussed, the world of education was intimately woven with 'ecclesiastical interests' and those of the 'ruling elite'. The author shows the component of exclusion that was a hallmark of the structure of disseminating knowledge. This meant that a dominant section of the population remained outside its purview. Alongside, he refers to certain fluidities. Thus, as discussed, many of the ideals were no more 'than utopian norms'.

The next three articles reflect the concerns of young scholars working on colonial Indian history. Debjani Das' paper, 'Is Insanity a "Female Malady"? Lunatic Women in the Asylums of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century', is a serious critique of patriarchal notions that madness is gendered. Based on a host of archival sources related to 'lunatic asylums' in colonial Bengal, she explores details related to the Indian and European women in the asylums, their social origins and the way in which the colonial health establishment constructed 'madness'. As she points out, women were 'prone to insanity as much as men were'.

Lauren Wilks', 'Missionary Medicine and the "Separatist Tradition": An Analysis of the Missionary Encounter with Leprosy in Late Nineteenth-Century India', takes up leprosy to question the hollowness of the post-enlightenment, 'enlightened order', when it came to negotiating those affected by the disease. Her exploration focuses on the missionary-leprosy interaction in colonial India over

the nineteenth century, emphasising the logic of segregation that was, among other features, conditioned by the idea of evangelisation.

Finally, Sonali Sharma's, 'Exploring Ideas: Early Marathi Fiction by Women', focuses on two novels by Kashibai Kanitkar (*Palkhicha Gonda - A Silk Tassel in Palanquin*, 1928) and Indirabai Sahasrabuddhe (*Keval Dhyeyasathi - Exclusively for a Higher Life*, 1924). Both these novels deal with different ideas associated with conjugal relations and the empowerment of women. As delineated by Sharma, the choice of these themes in the historical context of early twentieth century, account for their significance. As she puts it, their awareness of the writings and lives of British women enabled them to realize the generalised oppression of women. Moreover, it also made them compare their own lives with British women, assess as well articulate a critique of patriarchy.

Knowledge Transmission

Processes, Contents and Apparatus in Early India

Krishna Mohan Shrimali

I am extremely thankful to the Executive Committee of the Indian History Congress for giving me this opportunity of sharing my views on the subject that has received considerable attention in recent years. At the turn of this millennium, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation of the United States of America had funded a project entitled *Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems on the Eve of Colonialism* for four years (2001-04). It was located in the University of Chicago, which had also published the multiple volumes of *The Fundamentalism Project* in the early 1990s to explore the ideological bases of the strident emergence of various fundamentalisms (more specifically religious fundamentalism) after the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The latter half of the first decade of this millennium also saw the Report of the National Knowledge Commission of the Government of India, which is paving the way for increasing privatisation of higher education in India. The subject of today's symposium, therefore, is extremely timely. We propose to discuss processes, contents and apparatus of knowledge transmission in early India.

“*Sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*” thus exhort Upaniṣads, underlining one of the principal functions of education, viz., ‘Knowledge is that which leads to salvation.’ Glorious and exalted ideals of acquiring knowledge or being educated in early India have been written about extensively. Broadly, these were sources of illumination and power; they refined our nature through a happy blend of our physical, mental and spiritual faculties; infused piety and righteousness with a distinctive focus on the cultivation of high virtuous character rather than an accumulation of ‘learning’ *per se*. A popular Sanskrit saying of an unknown author sums up:

Vidyā dadāti vinayam; vinayāt yāti pātratām /

Pātratvāt dhanamāpnoti; dhanāt dharma tataḥ sukhaṁ //

The processes involved, that lasted for several years, made people self-confident and infused in them a spirit of social responsibility. It was a vehicle of the dissemination of cultural heritage – specially through the discharge of the triad of debts (*ṛṇas*), viz., *deva ṛṇa*, *ṛṣi ṛṇa* and *pitṛ ṛṇa*: obligations/debts to the gods, savants of the bygone ages and ancestors respectively. This is an

impressive conspectus of objectives of ancient Indian learning processes. Moot questions would, however, be: which *vidyā* (knowledge) and whose *vimukti* (salvation)? Answer to these questions are manifold and open up a considerable gamut of processes, contents and apparatus of the transmission of knowledge in the pre-Turkish India, i.e., up to circa 1200 CE.

This presentation is essentially rooted in textual notices – both literary and epigraphic. Archaeological antiquities, artefacts and other monumental as well as material remains that offer insights of transmission of technical know-how would largely be outside the scope of this presentation.

I

It is generally understood that barring perhaps the so-called ‘Frog Hymn’ of the *Rksamhitā* (VII.103.5), the earliest Vedic text does not throw much direct light on the learning processes.¹ One would perhaps look in vain for words such as *ācārya* (guru/teacher), *śiṣya* and *antevāsin* (disciple) and *āśramas* and so on, which occur frequently in subsequent later Vedic texts. We are familiar with the famous sentence in the *Taittirīya Aranyaka* (II.15), “One should study what has been prescribed for his own study” (*svādhyāyo’dhyetavyaḥ*). What is contained in this prescription of study is indeed comparable to the ‘Frog Hymn’ type of study of the recitation of the Veda by a student from the teacher. The correct accent, the correct intonation, the correct cadence, all these can be learned only direct from a teacher; it cannot be accomplished from books.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII.1.1-4) has this story: Nārada approached Sanatkumāra and said: “Teach me, Venerable Sir.” Sanatkumāra said to him: “Come to me and tell me what you already know (*yad vettha*). Then I will teach you what is higher (*ūrdhvam*) than that.” Nārada seems densely full of knowledge, and responds with a long list of seventeen fields of knowledge (*vidyā*) which he had read and mastered. These included the four Vedas, itihāsa and purāṇa (history and the ancient lore), the Veda of the Vedas (grammar), propitiation of the Fathers, the knowledge of numbers (mathematics), portents, treasures, logic, ethics (and politics), the knowledge of the gods, sacred knowledge, the knowledge of elemental spirits, weapons, astronomy, the knowledge of serpents and the fine arts.” Even after enumerating this long list, Nārada is acutely aware of his inferiority and confesses that he was simply a knower of verbal texts (*mantra-vid evāsmi*), that he knew only the meanings of words (*śabdārtha-mātra-vijñānavānasmi*) and that he was not a knower of the self (*ātma-vid*). Sanatkumāra, too, endorses this sense of humiliation by saying that all the various types of knowledge accumulated by him were “mere names” (*nāmaivaitat*).²

Higher stages in the acquisition of wisdom — beyond what Nārada had learnt, could come only after *upasadana* or voluntary approach of a disciple

to a teacher for higher knowledge on the subject — Knowledge of the *Brahman* in the Upaniṣads. Thus, the *Kena Upaniṣad* (I.1) starts with the following questions: “Urged by whom, directed by whom, does the mind fly? By whom joined does the primeval Breath proceed? By whom urged do they speak this word? And which God does join together the eye and the ear?”²³ The questions put in this verse by the pupil imply that the passing things of experience are not all and they depend on a permanent reality. Such inquisitiveness was not enough to get the nod of the teacher. When such six questioners of reputed families sought this higher knowledge of *Brahman*, they were bluntly told: “live with me another year with austerity, chastity and faith. Then ask us questions according to your desire and if we know, we shall, indeed, tell you all that.”

Apparently, even amongst those who were entitled to learn the Vedas, there were different world views of what constituted the real ‘Knowledge’. Unlike the ‘Knowledge of the Brahman’ expounded in the Upaniṣads, the *Brāhmaṇas* not only enumerate the *yāgas* (knowledge of sacrifices) as amongst ‘higher knowledge’, but also regard it as the weapons of the brahmins. Thus the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VII.19) states: “The weapons of the *brahman* are the weapons of the sacrifice; those of the *kṣatra* are the horse chariot, armour, and bow and arrow.” That the teachers of the Upaniṣads were also keen to create a halo of ‘secrecy’ [*Ch.Up. guhyā ādeśā*, III.5.2] and ‘ultimate mystery’ [*paramam guhyam*, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.3.17] around their *vidyā* would be a complementary evidence of somewhat antagonistic viewpoints on modes of transmitting their respective knowledge.

A characteristic feature of transmitting knowledge in ancient India was that the structure of disseminating knowledge was somewhat closed. A very large segment of population remained outside its purview and many of the aforesaid ideals were perhaps no more than utopian norms, whose violation was more a rule rather than an exception — certainly in the brahmanical ordering of things, and to a lesser degree, even in the non-brahmanical world view.

Knowledge is Power — this Foucaultian paradigm was understood in all its essence by early Indians millennia ago when they postulated *buddhīryasya balaṁ tasya* — one who has the intellect has the power as well. Is it surprising then that in the extremely stratified class society of early India, the managers of production and the real wielders of power devised mechanisms to monopolise the entire educational apparatus? The entitlement to teach and learn, the content of learning and education, the place of learning, and above all, the financial allocations — all these were so governed as to keep a close watch on the potential challengers to the vested political and power interests.

In one of the earliest monographs on early Indian education, C. Kunhan Raja⁴ seems to have been overawed by the enthusiasm of the nationalist ethos of the immediate post-independence years. Writing almost in the *praśasti* mode, he labours very hard to defend what he called the exclusion of 'citizens outside the three castes' from the 'universal and obligatory' education. Delivering the Dewan Bahadur K. Krishnaswami Fao Endowment Lectures in the University of Madras in November 1949 he said:

"When there is this prescription relating to the members of three castes, was there a denial of education to the others?... I do not want to enter into the question why the citizens outside the three castes were not included in this prescription [the obligatory study of the Veda along with the accessories (*Vedāṅgas*)] of an obligatory study. One may as well ask why in the Temple entry Act of Madras, the right to enter the temples was conferred only on the members of a particular religion. The prescription was only for those who accepted the *Vedic* tradition, and those who accepted the *Vedic* tradition consisted of the three castes.... What is enjoined for the members of the three castes is only the sacrament of *upanayana* and the subsequent study according to a particular method following a specific prescription. Education is free for all. No one was denied education under this prescription. *Denial of literacy to some is a factor in a later age, when the civilization had met with decadence.* What the members of the three castes specially received was what they considered obligatory for social status among themselves" (*emphases added*).

Three examples from the twin Sanskrit epics – the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* throw up some disconcerting questions that should show the chinks in Kunhan Raja's hypothesis:

[a] Why should Droṇāchārya be regarded as an epitome of an ideal and revered teacher? An *ācārya* using his students to fight his inveterate enemy (Drupada) could not have been a man of refined taste and noble character. What does one make of his desperation over his conditions of poverty and then making compromises? And, of course, the most glaring example of his attitude to the talented Ekalavya – young lad of forest tribe of the Bhils. Seeing in him the potential of surpassing the skills of his royal students – Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, and more particularly his most favourite amongst them (*i.e.*, Arjuna), Droṇa did not have the slightest qualm about asking for his thumb as *guru dakṣiṇā* even without teaching the Bhil boy. Here is a teacher who is concerned with the preservation of the status quo, who is disturbed at the prospect of the challenge to the power apparatus emanating from such people who could not be endowed with instruments of power, and a teacher who is cruel enough to kill the entire potential of his student.⁵

[b] Was the society justified in insisting upon the nobility of birth as a prime qualification for undergoing the process of learning? The case of Karna, the great Kaurava hero, is rather revealing. He had spared no efforts to serve and please his teacher Paraśurāma and in return learnt all skills of warfare, including the use of *brahmāstra* that was considered to be almost the last word in offensive weaponry. His humiliation by Draupadī at the time of her marriage (*svayaṃvara*) when she castigated him as *sūta*putra (son of a charioteer) and prevented him from entering the contest set for her marriage, is only one aspect of the link between dissemination of knowledge and society. However, what is more detestable is the stone-heartedness of Karna's *guru* (Paraśurāma) who cursed his talented pupil to the extent of almost disarming him of all his skills just because the pupil did not have the so-called illustrious birth in a brahmin or a kshatriya family to boast of. May be, Karna [unlike Satyakāma] lacked guts and moral courage to reveal his identity or maybe he was pragmatist enough to know the fate of his urge to learn, should his true identity was made public. His upbringing alone by a *sūta* (not even his birth in his family, for he was as much a son of Kunti as the other Pāṇḍavas were) did not ensure him a passport to enter the *āśramas* of renowned preceptors!⁶

[c] What could be the limit of intolerance on the part of the haves against the aspirations of the have-nots? Did the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* set this limit? The root of the state of social turmoil in the Kingdom of Lord Rāma was traced to the impertinence of a shudra named Śambūka, who ventured to study the Vedas, supposedly the sacred knowledge that could not be acquired by everyone and was indeed the monopoly of a small coterie of influential upper classes of the society. Poor Śambūka had to pay a very heavy price for showing his guts – he was killed on the orders of Lord Rāma. That was Rāmarājya!

Yet another component that seems to have been at the receiving end was the education of women. While recognizing that imparting of education to women is not necessarily a panacea for making her realize her 'self', it needs to be stressed that educational deprivation has often been used by dominant patriarchal and patrilineal societies to 'mould' women to their will. Notwithstanding a dozen names (Apālā, Ghoṣā, Lopāmudrā, Sikatā, Viśvavarā, Gārgī, Maitreyī, etc.) that are often rattled off to eulogise the state of women's education in the times when Vedic texts were composed, not much can really be made of these examples. First, they were largely belonging to the upper classes. Second, they were exceptions even in their own times. And finally, they could not go beyond a point in acquiring knowledge. In course of a discussion of a philosophic subject, Gārgī Vācakanvī, a female contemporary and rival of sage Yājñavalkya, was

rudely asked by the sage philosopher to shut up lest her head be chopped off!⁷ In another passage of similar strain, Max Muller cites the following observation of the Greek ambassador Megasthenes (*circa* fourth century BCE):

“Indians did not communicate their metaphysical doctrine to women; thinking that, if their wives understood these doctrines, and learned to be indifferent to pleasure and pain, and to consider life and death as the same, they would no longer continue to be slaves of others: or, if they failed to understand them, they would be talkative, and communicate their knowledge to those who had no right to it.”⁸

This was the fate of those women who showed some promise of scaling great heights through their inquisitiveness.

Girls in general were debarred from undergoing *upanayana* (preliminary educational ritual involving an initiation into the process of learning).⁹ It implied that even those of the upper classes could not claim it as a matter of right. They were merely recipients of some homely advices from their mothers, which never went beyond preparing girls for their service role at the place of their in-laws. One may invoke some fascinating parallels from ancient Greek society. Theophrastos (*circa* 370-228 BCE), the pupil of Aristotle who succeeded his master as the head of the Peripatetic School, wrote: “In the case of women, education in literacy seems to be the most essential to the extent that it is useful for household management. Further refinement makes women too idle in all other spheres, turning them into chatterboxes and busy bodies.” The poet Menandros wrote: “Teach a woman letters! A serious mistake-like giving extra venom to a terrifying snake.” How similar is it to Draupadī telling Satyabhāmā in the *Mahābhārata*: “The man that has a wife addicted to mantras would be afraid of her as of a snake that had got into the house.” And where a woman, in spite of such prejudice was still educated, it was considered something that was not naturally feminine and, therefore, an aberration. It may be surprising but not intriguing that even Socrates, whose philosophy of life rested on “Know Thyself”, betrayed a conspicuous gender-bias in respect of women’s education. Thus, in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, after hearing Ischomachus praise merit of the wife he has himself educated, Socrates declares (not without first invoking the goddess of austere matrimony): “By Hera! Ischomachus! You display your wife’s masculine understanding.” What was truly feminine was not education that bred individual thinking but obedience (to husband) that crushed it. In his reply to Socrates, Ischomachus asserts:

“There are other instances of her high mindedness that I am willing to relate to you, instances of her obeying me quickly in some matters after hearing it only once.”

We need to ponder over another aspect of the home-based education imparted to women. Draupadī says in the *Āraṇyaka Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*: “I learnt (in childhood) as a sage priest taught it to my brother, while I sat in my father’s lap and listened.” Draupadī and Vidulā are, the therefore, called *bahuśrutā*. A society which expected women to feed on the leftovers could hardly be expected to educate them differently. Education which was meant for socialization of female in service role, played a significant part in determining women’s social definition as a sex. The renowned Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her classic work *The Second Sex*: “One is not born, one rather becomes woman.”¹⁰

Marriage, as also reduction in the age of marriage and subsequent emphasis on the *pativrata dharma* of woman, which could do without education but not without her slavish service and devotion, virtually put an end to any inclination to receive formal education. No wonder, the *Manu Smṛti* (II.67) proclaims woman’s marriage as being equivalent to the rite of Vedic consecration (*vaidikaḥ smṛtaḥ*); serving the husband ensuring her the merits of living with the teacher (*gurvāśa*); and care of the house equals the tending of the sacred fire (*agniparikriyā*).

II

The non-brahmanical establishments of learning, primarily Buddhist and Jain, had initially started as *saṃghas* (monastic establishments) but later grew into *viḥāras* (centres of learning).¹¹ This transition from residences to seats of learning was slow but steady. A fifth century commentary on a Buddhist canonical work says: “even if there be a hundred or a thousand *bhikkhus* practicing meditation (*vipassanā*), there will be no realization of the Noble Path if there will be no learning (*pariyatti*).” Another text underlines the importance of learning thus: “There may or may not be realisation (*pativedho*) and practice (*patipatti*); learning is enough for perpetuation of *Sāsana* (the Buddhist creed).” A new term, viz., *grantha-dhura* or vocation of “book” was added to Pali terminology. Originally implying only the learning and teaching of the Piṭakas (Buddhist canonical works), the connotation of *grantha-dhura* was later widened to include languages, grammar, history, logic, medicine and other branches of learning. Yi Jing (I-tsing), a Chinese pilgrim coming to India in the seventh century, notes that by virtue of such liberal learning the monastic students were able to “oppose the heretics as they would drive beasts...explain away disputations as boiling water melts frost.” The monasteries had also become educational seminaries where admission was thrown open, at a much later date, not only to monks but also to the laity irrespective of caste, creed or colour. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* offers a long list of names of Theras, who were well-versed and experts not only in the Buddhist lore, but also in other subjects. From the accounts of *viḥāras* left

by the Chinese (Fa-xian, Xuan Zhuang and Yi Jing) and the Tibetan (Sum-pa and Tāranātha) pilgrims, we learn that many distinguished monk-scholars came from distant lands to impart glory to such renowned centres of learning as Takṣaśīla, Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapura and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Kāyasthas, who were looked down upon by brahmins, began to play important role in learning and literature in these establishments. To illustrate, Tathāgatarakṣita of Orissa, who belonged to a family of physicians by profession and kāyastha by caste, was a reputed professor of Tantra in the Vikramaśīla university in *circa* twelfth century.

As the maintenance of non-brahmanical centres was dependent upon the munificence of the laity, they could not be oblivious of the interests of the society and lead an isolated existence. This was achieved through a two-pronged strategy. First, unlike the brahmanical curricula, where manual artisanal skills were abhorred,¹² the non-brahmanical centres became schools of arts and crafts – eighteen *śilpas* and sixty-four *kalās* were integral parts of their curricula. This was a very constructive orientation that recognised dignity of labour. Second, the Buddha took pains to see that no inmate of the *saṃgha* ever insulted the laity which provided the financial support to the educational activities. This may have been a streak of pragmatism of the Buddha, but it seems to be betraying a very close and healthy interaction between the centres of learning and the society as a whole – quite in contrast to the secluded brahmanical *āśramas* that often functioned in forested surroundings.¹³ The use of commonly spoken languages such as Pali, instead of Sanskrit, may have been another factor that helped the early Buddhists in forging close liaison with the society. The same role may have been performed by the use of varieties of Prakrits such as Māgadhī and ardha-Māgadhī by the Jainas. It was only after the advent of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the early centuries CE that Sanskrit came to be used for Buddhist canonical writings. In case of the Jainas, the use of Sanskrit was even later – perhaps not before the sixth century CE.

It may not be out of place to stress that the crux of the Buddhist way of life has all through been *avijjā* (*avidyā*) standing for ignorance. Sure, the knowledge centres of the Buddhists would have made the dissemination of its real meaning an integral component of their curricula. As an antonym of *vidyā*, it is likely to be perceived as a negative connotation but the fact that strenuous dispelling of ignorance alone could lead one to *nibbāna* (the *summum bonum*) is enough to realize its positive objective. This indeed represented that long drawn process of learning – both for the monk as well as for the laity, to which allusion was made above. Epistemological bases of *avijjā* provide us clues about transmitting lines of knowledge systematically worked out by the Buddhists. It was certainly not the rote learning

epitomised in the aforesaid 'Frog Hymn' of the *Rksamhitā* that was sought to be perpetuated in the later Vedic apparatus of learning. Essentially, dispelling *avijjā* rested on the realisation of the futility of clinging to the notions of "I". *Jñāna*, the received wisdom – received through the *śāstras* – is indeed an obstacle in the way of such a realisation.¹⁴

It seems that the Buddhist learning centres focused on two-way transmission of knowledge in this respect, viz., [a] de-recognising any form of authority, including the *śāstras*, and with special accent on the non-recognition of the Vedas; and [b] underlining the imperative of self-learning and exhorting people to be a lamp unto themselves (*atta dīpo bhava*).¹⁵ The disciples of the Buddha had once heard him speaking thus:

"O Kalāmas, not by hearsay, not by tradition, not by customary, not by bookish authority, not by mere sophistry, not by an example, not by a grand form, not by the glamour of a philosophical view, not by grandeur, and not with the thought that one's teacher should be respected. But O Kalāmas, be guided by your own knowledge and conviction (*Āṅguttara Nikāya*).¹⁶

The Upanishadic *jñāna mārga* (the Path of Knowledge, later on the cornerstone of Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Vedānta) as the path to attain the *vidyā* enabling *vimukti* (deliverance) was largely confined to the members of the upper classes alone – the shudras and women having been strictly forbidden to acquire that *vidyā*. The Buddhist focus on the need to eliminate *avijjā* was a discourse that was disseminated without any discrimination of class, creed and sex – the Buddha's initial reluctance to admit women in the *saṃgha* notwithstanding.

III

Amongst the major contributions of the Jainas to the cause of knowledge transmission may be mentioned their propagation of the ideology of *śāstra-dāna* (gift of learned treatises). While not abhorring *bhūmi-dāna* (gift of land), the inculcation of the spirit of *śāstra-dāna* undoubtedly enhanced the reputation of the Jainas, who linked it up with *punya* (earning merit). This idea stressed that those who listen to the *śāstras* or caused others to listen them, as well as all those who write the *śāstras* and cause others to write them are entitled to earn considerable *punya*. The idea was, therefore, responsible for building up rich *bhaṇḍāras* (libraries) of hundreds of thousands of manuscripts as part of their monastic establishments variously called *saṃghas*, *gaṇas*, *gacchas*, *anvayas*, etc. Though no distinctive Jain educational centre comparable to Buddhist seats such as Nālandā and Takṣaśīla is known, yet prolific monastery-based seminaries are known from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka and to a lesser extent Andhra Pradesh. Most of these date from about 600 CE. Two aspects of learning at these centres need

to be highlighted: (a) the espousal and propagation of the cause of women by two sects of the Jainas, viz., the Śvetāmbaras and the Yāpanīyas, and (b) particular accent on the need to question Vedic dogmatism.

The Digambaras, because of their fundamental trait of nudity and no less because of their strong convictions about biological inferiority and impurity of women, had all through been reluctant to accept the claims of the fair-sex to enter the precincts of monastic establishments. This was worse than the attitude of the Buddha, who had, after initial reluctance, conceded the request of his favourite disciple Ānanda that women may join the *saṃgha* as *bhikkhūṇis* (nuns). That many of these *bhikkhūṇis* reached great intellectual heights is evident from a collection of their Psalms entitled *Therīgāthā* which formed part of the early Buddhist canon. Taking a cue from this, the Śvetāmbaras also fought against the Digambaras and carried on long debates for many centuries. These debates constitute great masterpieces of Jain logic. In the post-seventh century, specially in Karnataka, the Śvetāmbaras were joined by the Yāpanīyas. Śākaṭāyana, a Yāpanīya of the ninth century, wrote a work *Strī-nīrvāṇa-prākaraṇa* exclusively devoted to women's potentialities to attain *nīrvāṇa* (salvation). As a result, Śvetāmbara and Yāpanīya monastic establishments freely admitted women who could, and did, rise to the high status of being teachers of even men.¹⁷ How far did the Buddhists and the aforesaid Jain sects upheld the cause of the education and learning of lay-women is, however, not well-known. Indeed, even as inmates of the *saṃgha*, there are fair indications of relatively subordinate position of Buddhist *bhikkhūṇis* vis-a-vis that of *bhikkhus* (monks). Thus, the first of the eight *guru-dharmas* meant for nuns prescribed that even a very senior nun of one hundred years' ordination was expected to rise up front seat, salute with joined palms and offer homage to monk who may have been ordained only for a day. However, it need not be contested that even in such an atmosphere some nuns may have certainly acquired considerable prestige and dignity. We learn from more than 600 donative inscriptions from Sanchi (near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh) that nuns constituted an important group of donors.

The history of Jain opposition to Vedic dogmatism goes back to the times of Mahāvīra himself. While the brahmanical classification have always dubbed the anti-Veda tendencies as heretical and heterodox (*nāstika*), the Jainas stood for relativity of Knowledge and Truth. Their doctrines of *nayas* (points of view), later developed as *syādvāda* (doctrine of many-sided Truth), was truly speaking, intellectual *ahimsā* of a very high order. Like *avijjā* of the Buddhists, *syādvāda* was central to Jain curriculum in their centres of learning. One may even venture to suggest that it occupies a distinctive place in the history of Indian logic.

IV

The post-sixth century scenario — almost all over the sub-continent — was marked by distinctive recognition of scripts and languages. This is specially reflected in thousands of inscriptions which are available from different parts of the country. In fact, the proto-types of most of the modern Indian languages can be traced to these centuries. Rājasekhara, a noted writer (circa 860-950 CE) speaks of various regional cultures distinguished by their linguistic peculiarities. Some of these are identified as Gaudīya (in eastern India), Pañcālī (in the upper Ganga Valley and north-western India), Lāṭīya (in western India) and Vaidarbhī (in the Deccan and the South). It should not be difficult to imagine that such a development of languages and scripts must have affected centres of learning as well.

A few notable features of the *modus operandi* of the transmission of knowledge during the millennium following the sixth century can be identified as:

[a] Proliferation of temple-based *ghaṭikā-sthānas*, *maṭhas*, *agrahāras*, *brahmapuris*, specially in the Deccan and the far south. While the *brahmapuri* was a distinctive quarter of brahmanas within a settlement, the *agrahāra* was a whole village/settlement donated to learned brahmanas. The *agrahāras*, however, had a considerably expansive presence in different parts of India. The allusions to *gurukulas*, *gurugṛhas*, *ṭolas*, *chātraśālas* figure in inscriptions from Assam. These centres of learning were lavishly endowed with provisions for free board and lodging for students. Some random examples would be sufficient to underscore this point. A record from Ganeshawadi in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra¹⁸ states that in 1099 CE *mahāsāmantādhipati* Bhīmanātha constructed a temple on the banks of Bhīmasamudra in the village Pippala and endowed it with 500 *nivartanas* of land for its upkeep and for feeding ascetics and students in the Sarasvatīmaṇḍapa (specially meant for running a school) of the same place. Another inscription from Motebennur¹⁹ records a gift of the village Nagarahala and some other lands for maintenance of *maṭha* and of the students studying therein. The gift was entrusted to Lokabharaṇapaṇḍita of the Kāl amukha school.

We read in inscriptions of tenth and eleventh centuries that the *ghaṭikā-sthāna* at Nagavapi/Nagavavi (Nagai, a village about three kilometres of Chittapur in the Gulbarga district of Karnataka) had hundreds of acres of land. It was established by *daṇḍanāyaka* Madhusūdana. It had 252 students, 200 learning the Vedas and the other 52, the Śāstras. There were nine teachers for this purpose and a six-member *bhaṇḍārīvarga* (committee of librarians) was an integral part of this *ghaṭikā-sthāna*.²⁰ The Dharwar Plates of the time of Simhaṇa (1247 CE) from Karnataka informs us about donations of 180

nivartanas of land to three *gāvunḍas* and 56 brahmins (total shares being 68) belonging to 11 different *gotras*. It was an *iṣṭadāna* – land given to the donees out of affection. The purposes of the gift included two *nivartanas* each for *sattrā* (feeding house), *khaṇḍikā* (school), *bhaṭṭavṛtti* (maintenance of teacher) and *bālaśikhā* (education of children).²¹

It appears that the primary education started in the temple and in one epigraph it is referred to as *balaśikṣe* or *akṣaraśikṣe*.²² In epigraphic records *akṣarakhaṇḍike* is another term used for primary education. The above record refers to Kannada *akṣaraśikṣe* as well. That besides Kannada, other languages were also taught is clear from an inscription from Malinge which refers to *bālaśikṣe* in Nāgara, Kannada and Tigula, i.e., Nāgarī, Kannada and Tamil.²³ Vedas, Vedāṅgas, logic, grammar, Mīmāṃsā and similar other subjects formed the curriculum for students of higher education. Sometimes some subjects were specialised in some centres. At Lokkiguṇḍi, for example, a certain Someśvarārya founded an endowment for teaching the *Prabhākara* doctrine (of *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*).²⁴ Having established there a lecture-hall for the purpose, he also made full provision for a master, teachers and a company of students including foreign students.

The Nidhanpur grant of king Bhāskaravarman (of ancient Kāmarūpa) mentions Mayūrasālmālagrahāra. The grant mentions 208 brahmins and their respective shares in the land granted.²⁵ The Pashchimbhag grant of King Śrī Chandra mentions grants of land to a School of Grammar, to four Vaṅgāla and four Deśāntarīya *maṭhas*, teaching the four Vedas each, and to six-thousand brahmins. The grant shows that Chandrapuri or Chandrapura had developed into a centre of higher education by tenth century. The school of Grammar and the eight *maṭhas* (four Vaṅgāla and four Deśāntarīya) were in all probably centres of higher and specialized learning in Grammar and the Vedas.²⁶

In the residential institution at Talagunda²⁷ there were six classes, one for *Ṛgveda*, one each for *pada*, and *kalpa* of *Yajurveda* and one each for *Sāmaveda*, *Śabdaśāstra*, *Rūpavatāra*, *Nyāsa* and *Prabhākara*. In each class there were eight students. Arrangements were made for feeding these 48 students besides 300 other brahmins, in the feeding house. Two cooks were also employed for this purpose. We may mention here that the term *bhaṭṭavṛtti* often occurring in inscriptions relates to grants of land to learned men. It was not merely a stipend for study but also for teaching and for carrying on cultural activities. We may cite an epigraphic evidence wherein Mahādevacamupa is found making a grant as *bhaṭṭavṛtti* to teachers who taught *Ṛg* and *Yajurvedas*.²⁸ The term *chattavṛtti* or *chātravṛtti* likewise indicates that they were grants made for the maintenance of students who were studying in such institutions.²⁹ Epigraphic allusions to *dhēnuṣkavidyā*,

cellakaparamparā, dharmapaddhati, dīkṣāgrahaṇaprastāva, gandhavavedabudha, gurusāhsaikarasika, maṭhādhipati, nītiśāstra, śākhādhyāyina, Sāmavedika, Vedāntavid, astravidyā, paurāṇika, śrutivid, śrutismṛtītiḥāsapurāṇavettā, tismṛtyācārapraṇadhīṣaṇa, etc. in inscriptions from different regions of India give us an idea of subjects of study, expertise developed, and personnel deployed to organise the Sanskrit studies based apparatuses of learning.

[b] An element of avarice and perhaps even a rudimentary commercialization had set in during this millennium. This is particularly seen in the emergence of “new brahmanas” who were out to grab land in the name of rendering their traditional six-fold duties of learning and teaching of brahmanical scriptures and performing sacrificial rituals. Indeed, this had set in considerable competition resulting in the transformation of ethical norms in non-brahminical establishments as well, which found it expedient enough to give up their inhibitions about non-possession of property.

[c] The exaltation of the status of *guru* in some Tantrik schools of Buddhism may have had some repercussions on the teachers in educational centres. At least in the case of Jain establishments this is rather well documented. They created the office of a *bhaṭṭāraka*, whose genealogical charts are available from *circa* eighth century. Invariably, they were erudite and dedicated scholars. Along with the institution of *śāstra-bhaṇḍāras* and *śāstra-dāna* they proved to be influential disseminators of knowledge. In some cases, however, such organisational heads tended to perpetuate *gurudom*, the evidence of which is particularly marked in the Śaiva *maṭhas*.

[d] The imaginative notion of *śāstra-dāna* inculcated by the Jainas, caught the attention of other religious functionaries well. Since brahmins and brahmanical establishments were the biggest beneficiaries of the post-sixth century land donations (*bhūmi-dāna*), there was a significant dispersal of brahmanical culture. One major manifestation of this was the preparation of hundreds of thousands of manuscripts in Sanskrit language all over India. While subjects figuring in the lists of these manuscripts are very varied, some collections do betray certain specific predilection. For instance, Prayoga manuscripts on Vedic rituals in Wai (Maharashtra) and those on Pūjā practices in Jain *bhaṇḍāras* in Rajasthan stand out rather conspicuously.

V

In recent years several Indian archaeologists, scientists and the bureaucracy in the scientific establishments of the Indian government have passionately taken up the cause of ‘Traditional Knowledge Systems’ (TKS). Partly influenced by the market forces determining the so-called ‘intellectual property rights’, exponents of this specialised zone of knowledge transmission have often tended to push back the antiquity of several

manifestations of technological know-how in the cultivation of food and commercial crops as well as in metallurgical techniques. The TKS are the corpus of accumulated folk knowledge gained through trial and error through millennia. Thus, it is argued that the Himalayan medicine system has more than 1800 plants, of which a large number of them entered the *materia medica* of Āyurveda. Similarly, the *naulas* (water springs) are seen as marvels of traditional hydraulic technology that still meet the demand of clean potable water. 'Traditional technologies' have also been identified in quake resistant 'domestic architecture', 'distillation of alcohol', 'fermenting' food and beverages, and 'dyeing' wool and cotton through 'natural dyes'.³⁰

The exponents of the TKS have also fallen prey to emotionally surcharged chauvinistic claims about the antiquity of the 'traditional knowledge'. In the process, proper scientific reasoning has become a casualty. This is clearly brought out in a recent assessment of antiquity of rice cultivation. We quote below, *in extenso*, from this contribution:

"A large number of rituals and festivals are associated with rice in Central Himalayas, the Ganga valley and elsewhere. Rice is believed to have soul, invariably worshipped as deity, believed to be a symbol of prosperity, beauty, fertility, well-being and so on. It is applied on the forehead of the deities as well as human beings with vermilion every day in South Asia. The shamans use intact grains to ward off evil spirits, to cure patients, to locate missing person, to narrate past and future events, etc. In the Central Himalayas, only the highly authorized people can cook rice in special hearths that are made in each house. No other cereal has such incredible respect in the society, perhaps because it was the first cereal people cultivated in different regions of South Asia. Though the early dates for domestication of rice in South Asia have yet to be fully accepted, all these rituals and festivals which are part of our traditional knowledge system, clearly indicate that rice (*indica* type) cultivation has a great antiquity than what is generally accepted today."³¹

In a recent communication, Professor D.P. Agrawal wrote to me: "Most of the science and knowledge originate in an ambience which is rich in biodiversity and geo-diversity. It is the observations and trial and error experiments of the so called primitive people that are responsible for metallurgy and medicine systems as is the case with Kumaun. *The elite knowledge systems have only codified and systematized the folk oral knowledge tradition*"³² [emphases added]. In this context it needs to be recalled that 'traditions' are always in the making. In societies with multiple strands of cultural developments, such as that of India through the millennia, it is always difficult, nay almost impossible, to locate them in specific

temporal and spatial terms. Observing the working of today's ironsmiths in the Bastar area, for example, does not enable us to determine its actual antiquity – whether it is 200 or 2000 years' old practice. We also notice that processes of identifying sources of the TKS often end up in regional and parochial chauvinism. Attempts to see 'Himalayan' medicinal system as the product of the recently created Indian state of Uttarakhand would be a case in point. 'Tradition' is a value-loaded concept and its transmission is a complex phenomenon. There are several pitfalls in its indiscriminate use, which create confusion. If we scrutinise recent writings on histories of burnt brick-making and other crafts and industries that tend to focus on elements of 'continuities' and 'discontinuities / disjunctures', the need for caution in invoking the TKS would get highlighted.³³

Conclusion

The apparatus of education in pre-Turkish India, as in other parts of the ancient world, was tied up with ecclesiastic interests on the one hand and those of the ruling elite on the other. It also tended to be somewhat sectarian. The exclusion of a very large segment of society and more significantly that of the productive forces, specially in centres of Sanskrit learning, suited the common interests of these ecclesiastical establishments. It might be tempting to assume that the ancient Indian ideals of transmitting knowledge were geared towards producing "organic intellectuals" for people in the Gramscian terms, who were somewhat unconcerned with the sheer material concerns of the society. This would be a rather charitable view of the ground reality. "Maitreyī's worldly worries might well have some transcendental relevance (as Indian religious commentators have discussed over many centuries), but they certainly have worldly interests as well" as Amartya Sen puts it.³⁴ The brahmanical establishments as custodians and disseminators of Sanskrit knowledge, essentially stood for the maintenance of homoeostasis – hegemonising interests of the social elites and averse to any disturbance of the status quo of entrenched class interests. This makes us somewhat uncomfortable when we find some leading Sanskritists venturing to organise the Research Project on *Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems on the Eve of Colonialism* (SKSEC).³⁵ The project covers two centuries (1550-1750) prior to the establishment of colonialism, which are supposed to constitute one of the most innovative epochs of Sanskrit systematic thought in language analysis, logic, hermeneutics, moral-legal philosophy, and the rest. It is alleged that this dynamism diminished with the spread of European power and by 1800 the capacity of Sanskrit to make history had vanished. No effort has been made to account for this so-called "momentous rupture." May we recall that Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the leading lights of Indian National

Movement had written a tract entitled *Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College Mein Talim : Sanskrit Par Ek Mukhtasar Nazar* in 1893 (A Historical Glance at Sanskrit Education in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College).³⁶ He unhesitatingly argued here that religion and theology are integral parts of learning and justified it by saying that “according to the teachings of the Vedic rishis the spiritual and mundane subjects should not be treated separately. Religion leads one to higher levels in life...” We have argued above that the non-brahmanical educational establishments, while not being oblivious of ecclesiastical requirements, betrayed a considerable scientific temper towards the transmission of the *śāstra*-based learning process.³⁷ Relatively speaking, their attitude towards the needs of making the educational apparatus more socially inclusive has also to be recognised. But was that enough? Did the processes, contents, and apparatus of knowledge transmission in the pre-Turkish India aim at the dissemination of an ‘Idea of India’ that has always been pluralistic? While Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore was inspired by the *āśramas* in establishing his Santiniketan, one would look in vain to find evidence of those ancient learning establishments venturing to realise Gurudeva’s ideals of a Knowledge Centre embodied in his famous lines:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls; ...
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sands of dead habit; ...
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”*

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NOTES

1. The passage (*RV*, VII.103.5) is: “When among them one (frog) repeats the words of the other like a student that of the teacher”. This idea is also found in the *Rāmāyana* of Kambar in Tamil (*Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, *Kārkāṭapaṭalam*, 115): “frogs of many species croak like the noisy boys of many grades with their learned teacher.” Kambar’s parallel is cited

- in C.Kunhan Raja, *Some Aspects of Education in Ancient India*, Dewan Bahadur K.Krishnaswami Rao Endowment Lectures in the University of Madras, November 1949, The Adyar Library, Madras, 1950, p.12, n.2.
2. In a recent work (*Crisis and Knowledge: The Upanishadic Experience and Storytelling*, OUP, New Delhi, 2003), Yohanan Grinshpon has argued that Nārada's is primarily a scholar's predicament, and his prevailing sense of inferiority is apparently common to almost all the recipients of Upanishadic 'knowledge'. Making a special case for looking at various Upanishadic stories connected with the seekers of higher knowledge – Knowledge of the *Brahman* – he strongly contends that these narratives represent crises of teachers, disciples, wives and mothers, sons and gods [*op.cit.*, pp.55-56]. He bemoans the fact that the long tradition of commentary and scholarship on the Upaniṣads has relegated these personal crises to an irrelevant background as is evident in Oldenberg's [*The Doctrines of the Upaniṣads and the Early Buddhism*, translated by S.P.Shrotri, Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, p.95] view of them as 'clumsy sketches' of everyday life. Grinshpon himself, however, prefers to read in these different myths a variety of inferiorities that are differently articulated. The story of Satyakāma's life (*Ch.Up.IV.4*) centres on his inner doubts concerning the identity of his father, and consequently his own entitlement to 'knowledge'. Maitreyī's suffering (*Br.Up. II.4* and *IV.5*) is also different – she seeks 'knowledge' prompted by a sudden awareness of childlessness and mortality. The crises/life-stories of Śvetaketu's pride and vulnerability (*Ch.Up. V.3.1-5*), Upakosala's depression following his desire for his *guru*'s wife (*Ch.Up.IV.10.1*), Indra's doubts (*Ch.Up.VIII.7*), Uddālaka's anxiety (*e.g.*, his refusal to teach five rich householders, *Ch.Up.V.11.4*) and humility (story of his becoming king Jaivali's disciple, *Ch.Up. V.3.6-9*) are conventionally different contexts of discovery, essentially irrelevant to justification and interpretation of the theory of Self discussed in the Upaniṣads. As we watch Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī more closely, it becomes evident that conflict and crisis underlie Maitreyī's story to such an extent that, rather than a story of happy communion and spiritual elevation, it emerges as a tale of terrible conflict, anger, agony, misunderstanding, and – for Maitreyī, at least – an unhappy ending. Though Maitreyī is a *brahmavādinī*, she is also a woman. Being childless, she is assertive – even aggressive – towards her inconsiderate, denying husband. [Grinshpon, *op.cit.*, pp.69 and 72]
 3. *Praśna Upaniṣad* (so-called because it contains questions, I.1-2) also opens thus: "Sukeśas of the Bhāradvāja Family, Satyakāma of the Śibi family, Gārgya of the family of Sūrya, Kausalya of the Family of Āśvalayāna, Bhārgava of the Vīdarbha country, Kabandhi Kātyāyana – indeed these, keeping *Brahman* in view and firmly devoted to *Brahman*, seeking (knowledge of) the ultimate *Brahman*, with the kindled fuel in their hands, approached the Lord Pippalāda, (being sure) that he certainly will tell (them) all about it."
 4. C.Kunhan Raja, *op.cit.*, pp.41-43.
 5. Wendy Doniger's *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, Penguin/Viking, New York, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 290-292, draws our attention to a 16th century Jain version embodied in the *Kathāratnākara* wherein Arjuna and not Droṇa becomes the villain in asking gift from Bhīmala (a Bhīl). The gift comprises of *pūjā* and not the Vedic tuition fee (*dakṣiṇā*). Droṇa, in a total contrast to the *Mahābhārata* version, not only grants a boon to Bhīmala – capacity/skill to shoot without thumb, but also calls Arjuna a cheat.
 6. This image of *guru* Paraśurāma along with that of Droṇācārya certainly dents the image of "teacher as the most honoured citizen of the country in ancient times" and teachers as " 'Śiṣṭas', i.e., those who could not make a mistake in the matter of the relation of actions and their fruits, who could not be suspected of any personal motive in their public activities, who were actuated only by the one motive of protection, preservation and propagation of *Dharma* among men" as created by C.Kunhan Raja, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111.
 7. *Gārgi mātīprākṣiḥ, mā te mūrdhā vyapaptat, Br.Up., III.6.1.*
 8. F. Max Muller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature so far as it illustrates the*

- Primitive Religion of the Brahmins*, first published in 1859, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi Reprint, 1963, p.24.
9. Notwithstanding this indisputable fact, C. Kunhan Raja, *op.cit.*, pp.106-108 insists that there was nothing wrong with the education of women, at least up to the Vedic times. He sees their decline in this domain "only from the time of Pāṇini to the time of Kātyāyana, who wrote the first emendations to Pāṇini grammar, and of Patañjali who gave the comprehensive exposition of Pāṇini, along with Kātyāyana's work." It may be noted that this alleged period of decline corresponds with the five centuries of the post-Mauryan times, i.e., from about circa 200 BCE. It is well known that these centuries are marked by the arrival of several "foreigners" such as the Śakas, Kuṣāṇas, Parthians, Yavanas, etc. It needs recalling that Kunhan Raja (*op.cit.*, pp.43, 110-111) had also attributed the "denial of literacy to some" as a "factor of later age, when the civilization had met with decadence" and that he is upholder of the notion of "medieval ignorance and superstitions."
 10. For these insight of women's education and specially the Greek parallels, see Shalini Shah, *The Making of Womanhood: Gender Relations in the Mahābhārata*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1995, pp.140-145.
 11. Apart from the old work of Sukumar Dutt (*Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962), see also the subsequent work of Dipak Kumar Barua, (*Vihāras in Ancient India: A Survey of Buddhist Monasteries*, Calcutta Indian Publications, 1969) for useful surveys of the subject. Two other specific works on the renowned Buddhist educational establishments are: Hasmukh Dhirajlal Sankalia, *The University of Nālandā*, first published in 1934, reprinted in 1972 (Indian Historical Institute Series, Oriental Publication, Delhi) and Radhakrishna Chaudhary, *The University of Vikramaśīla*, The Bihar Research Society, Patna, 1975.
 12. This reminds us of Gandhi's *Nai Talim* focusing on education of the mind and the intellect concurrently with that of every physical and bodily skill. Gandhi used poetic words in this connection when he said that he wanted in his education not only thinking brain but thinking fingers as well.
 13. How secluded the brahmanical *āśramas* were? The descriptions of *āśramas* of Kaṇva and Vasiṣṭha in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* and *Raghuvamśam* respectively, and of Vālmiki in the *Uttararāmaccrita* of Bhavabhūti have created somewhat romantic images of these institutions of brahmanical learning. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* calls the place by the term *acchadirdarśa* (a place from where the roof of houses in the village cannot be seen). This cannot be very far from the habitations of men. It is, therefore, argued in some quarters that these were perhaps "penance groves" rather than "forest hermitages". (C.Kunhan Raja, *op.cit.*, p.103). However, another alternative proposition suggests that the *āśramas* or "forest universities of ancient India were educational communities in the midst of the quiet and beauty of forests away from towns, courts and market places, where teachers and their wives shared a common life of work, study and worship with the students and lived as a family" (cf. Asha Devi Aryanayakam, 'Tagore and the Ashram Ideal of Education', in Sunilchandra Sarkar, ed., *Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary Celebrations: Proceedings of Conferences*, Vol. I, Education, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1961, pp.8-17). In contrast to these constructions, Romila Thapar argues that early Sanskrit texts such as the Vedas and epics (the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*) see *grāma* (settlements) and *araṇya* (forests) in confrontational and dichotomous terms. The *araṇya* is disorderly, unknown, unpredictable, and inhabited by predators and strange creatures. different from those living in the *grāma*. The forest is the habitat of those who are sent into exile. Cf. Romila Thapar, 'Forests and Settlements', in Mahesh Rangarajan, ed., *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader*, Pearson Longman, New Delhi, 2007, pp.33-48.
 14. The *Śivasūtra* of the early medieval times has a *sūtra jñānam bandhaḥ* (received knowledge is a bondage) which echoes similar sentiment. In modern times Jotiba Phule

attributed the decline of intellect, morality, progress and wealth amongst the lower social orders to the absence of *vidyā*.

15. The word *veda* has been used to refer to certain texts, but its original meaning is simply 'knowledge'. Another term for the *Veda*, those texts which constituted the knowledge which really counted, is *brahman*. A 'brahman person' is a brahmin. The *Veda* had appeared among men through the mouths of such people, and in the Buddha's day (and long after) access to it still only lay in the same quarter. The *Veda*, embodying true knowledge, was the source of all authority; but what the *Veda* said — and indeed what it meant — one could learn only from brahmins. To deny the authority of the *Veda*, therefore, was to deny the authority of the brahmins, and vice-versa. This denial simultaneously meant the questioning of the social order nurtured and sustained by them. For a detailed discussion of issues involved on these issues and the positions taken by the early Buddhists and the Jains, see Krishna Mohan Shrimali, *The Age of Iron and the Religious Revolution, c.700 – c.350 BCE*, (being Vol.3A of *A People's History of India*, edited by Professor Irfan Habib), 2nd. Ed., 2008, p.46f.

16. A medieval text in Sanskrit, viz., *Nyāyaprakaraṇa* of the *Yogavaśiṣṭha*, has a verse:

"*api pauruṣamādeyaṁ śāstraṁ cedyuktibodhakam /
anyatvāṣamapi tyājyaṁ bhāvyaṁ nyāyayiksevinām //
yuktivyaktamupādeyaṁ vacanaṁ bālakādapi /
anyattriṇamiva tyājyamapyuktaṁ padmajanmanā //*"

"A Shastra, though man-made, should be accepted, if it appeals to reason; and the contrary one rejected, though claiming to be inspired. We should be guided by our sense of the just alone. A saying sound in reason should be accepted, though it proceeds from a child; and the contrary one rejected as a straw, though it purports to proceed from the God Brahma." [Cited in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1st edition has been used here), XXXVI, 1970, p.87. The edition compiled in 100 volumes was published between 1958 and 1994 by the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.]

When the Buddha thus repeatedly expected his followers not to get overawed by the so-called hallowed 'sacredness' of religious scriptures; when he made a passionate plea: 'Be a Lamp unto Yourself' (*atta dīpo bhava*), he was indeed striking at the roots of Vedic dogmatism, just as the Jains had done through their *Syādvāda*. These alternative systems were not merely epistemological exercises but were proclamations of socio-religious revolutions that sought to question the fundamental premises of the existing social norms and power structure based thereon. This aspect has been discussed in detail in our forthcoming contribution entitled 'New Religions and the Age of Reason : A Study of Early Buddhist and Jaina Systems.'

17. Cf. Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 1992 (originally published by the University of California Press, 1991), *passim* and specially ch.2.
18. *ARIE*, 1964-65, No.354.
19. *ARIE*, 1933-34, B.K.No.144.
20. *Hyderabad Archaeological Series*, No.8.
21. *EI*, XXXIV, No.7, p.35f.
22. *EC*, VII, Sk.185.
23. *EC*, III, Tn.275.
24. 'Gadag Inscription of Vikramāditya VI: The 23rd Year = 1098 CE', *EI*, XV, p.362, verses 74-76.
25. Cf. Mukunda Madhava Sharma, *Inscriptions of Assam*, Department of Publications, Gauhati University, Assam, 1978, pp.38-81.
26. D.C.Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. II, p.92f.
27. *EC*, VII, Sk. 185.
28. Cited by B.R.Gopal, *The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa and the Kalachuris*, Karnatak University, Dharwad, 1981, p.422.

29. *South Indian Inscriptions*, XI, pt. II, No.171.
30. Cf. D.P.Agrawal, Sameer Jamal and Manikant Shah, eds., *Traditional Knowledge Systems and Archaeology*, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2007, *passim*.
31. J.S.Kharakwal and A.Yano, 'Rice Cultivation: Associated Rituals and Festivals with Special Reference to Central Himalayas' in D.P.Agrawal, Sameer Jamal, et al, *op.cit.*, pp.83-99.
32. Personal communication dated January 05, 2010. See also D.P.Agrawal and Vasudha Pant, 'Interaction of Knowledge Systems and Ganga Valley Urbanisation' (*mimeographed*), which refers to interaction of "the Greater Tradition (*mārgī*) and the Lesser Tradition (*deśī*).” In fact, it is argued here that the Himalayan medicinal plants and Himalayan medicine must have provided a means of interaction between the Ganga valley and the Central Himalayas. It is, however, not clear as to which of these is the *mārgī* and which one constitutes the *deśī*.
33. Krishna Mohan Shrimali, 'People's Archaeology and Archaeology for the People', Y.D.Sharma Memorial Lecture delivered at Indian Archaeological Society on March 21, 2009, *Purātattva*, No.39, 2009, pp.189-90. See also R.S.Sharma, *Rethinking India's Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 51-52; Shereen Ratnagar, *Makers and Shapers: Early Indian Technology in the Home, Village and Urban Workshop*, Tulika Books, 2007, *passim*; and *idem*, 'A Past to Mirror Ourselves', 27th Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari Memorial Lecture delivered at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi on 25th February, 2009 (*Mimeographed*).
34. Cited by Sudeep Banerjee in his Tagore Memorial Lecture (2008) entitled 'Where Knowledge is Free' delivered at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur on May 06, 2008.
35. The Project was organized by the University of Chicago between 2001 and 2004. Its four working papers were published in *The Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.30, 2002, pp.431-513.
36. B.R.Nanda, Chief Editor, *Collected Works of Lala Lajpat Rai*, Vol. 1, Manohar, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 95-111.
37. Amartya Sen, 'Nalanda and the Pursuit of Science', Keynote Address delivered at the 98th Indian Science Congress in Chennai on January 04, 2011. The address underlines the scientific temper inculcated through the curricula at the internationally renowned seat of Buddhist learning at Nalanda. For the complete text of the Address, see *The Hindu*, Delhi Edition, January 08, 2011, p.11.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARIE : Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy

Br.Up.: Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

Ch.Up.: Chāndogya Upaniṣad

EC : Epigraphia Carnatica

EI : Epigraphia Indica

Is Insanity a 'Female Malady'?

Lunatic Women in the Asylums of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century

Debiani Das

During the early nineteenth century asylums were built to remove wanderers, deviants, vagrants, and criminals from civilised society and seclude them in a closed building away from the vision of the civilised life. With the gradual change in the definitions and understandings of insanity constructed by the medical practitioners over the period of nineteenth century, not only the geographical location of the asylums changed from its central position to the peripheries of the city and again back to the central position, but strict rules were also implemented for the admission of lunatics into asylums. Some of the 'native' asylums of Bengal in its lower provinces were Russapaglah or Dullunda, Dacca, Moorshedabad, Patna, Cuttack, Berhampore, and Moydapore. The function and the nature of the European Asylum of Calcutta were different from that of the 'native' asylums. It was built to temporarily detain the European insane before they were sent back to England for further treatment. Therefore, the condition of lunatics and the kind of treatment that followed in the Asylum varied from the 'native' lunatic asylums.

The medical practitioners appointed at asylums were usually not trained for the treatment of mental diseases. While the physicians dealt with general illnesses, most of them did not know how to deal with mental illness. Therefore, definitions and classifications of insanity varied from one asylum to another, which often led to a more generalised, non professional or non specialised treatment of insanity. In most of the cases bodily diseases were dealt with, which ranged from general weakness of the body to treatment of diseases like cholera. At every stage of their practice in the Asylums of Bengal, European physicians not only followed the current medical literature of England and Europe but they also tried to implement it in practice. This translation of practices ranged from the duties and qualifications of a Superintendent to the changing perceptions and definitions of insanity. They often drew comparisons between Asylums of Bengal and that of Europe and England. This was reflected in their definitions on insanity and the method of treatment for the malady. The understanding of insanity by the various English and European physicians of the nineteenth century, many of whom were also the superintendents of the asylums, constructed the

different forms, causes and effects of insanity. While the medical professionals defined causes of insanity amongst men in terms of their physical weaknesses, women's insanity was often defined in terms of her emotional expressions, behaviours, and manners.

Within this context this article is an attempt to understand the condition of insane women in the European and 'native' lunatic asylums of Bengal in its lower provinces in the nineteenth century.

Social Composition and the Problem of 'Prior Case History'

Women who were admitted into the 'native' asylums of Bengal mainly included beggars, coolies, cultivators, labourers, fisherwomen, housewives, prostitutes, by 1870s there were also references of insane women who prior to their admission worked as domestic servants, washerwomen, shopkeepers, and weavers. Of the different kinds of women admitted in the European Lunatic Asylum, European soldiers' wives and daughters were predominant. The point of difference in admission procedures between women into the 'native' and European Lunatic Asylum was because in the former asylum women were often picked up from the streets by the police officers and admitted into the asylum on the permission of the Magistrate, whereas in the latter instance, women were admitted by the members of their families, friends or relatives. Although Government provided fund for the maintenance of European Lunatics but it mainly ran on private ownership, where the individual patient's family had to pay for their maintenance at the asylum. The situation was different at the 'native' asylums where the Company and later the Crown owned the responsibility for their maintenance.

In 1862, A. Fleming, the Official Civil Surgeon of the Moorshedabad Lunatic Asylum, stated that institutionalised lunatics mostly belonged to the poorer classes of the community.¹

He further stated that women were usually not sent into the asylum at Moorshedabad, other than women who wandered on the streets as friendless *faqueer*, the bazaar girl, and criminals. According to the official records, the majority of the lunatics, either male or female admitted in the asylums of Bengal were from the 'lowest and least educated classes'. This class composition of the lunatics continued to be the same throughout the nineteenth century. For instance, even after a decade later amongst the patients admitted into the Moydapore Asylum by 1872, the male population mainly consisted of cultivators whereas beggars made up the female population.² The social composition of women continued to be the same when in Dullunda in 1875, there were two beggars, five coolies, one fisherwoman, one housewife, eight prostitutes, three domestic servants, one

washerwoman among female inmates and twenty two cases were 'unknown'. Similarly, at Dacca there were one beggar woman, two *grihisti* or housewives, one domestic servant, and one case was 'unknown'. Amongst women admitted at Patna there were one beggar, three cultivators, one labourer, one prostitute, one domestic servant, one shopkeeper, one weaver, and five cases were 'unknown'. At Cuttack in the same year, an insane woman was a coolie before she was admitted. At Berhampore, there were four cultivators, one labourer, two domestic servants, and one from some other occupation.³ At Dullunda in 1885, there were two beggars, one maid servant, one potter, one prostitute, one teacher. Eight women were not involved in any sort of occupation, and in case of one woman lunatic there was no prior history. At Dacca there was one beggar, seven cultivators, and one Christian missionary. At Patna there were five beggars, two cultivators, and two labourers. At Berhampore there were one beggar, one cultivator, and the case histories of three women lunatics were not known.⁴

Medical officers faced difficulties in knowing the exact details of a lunatic's age and previous history of illnesses. This, according to them, was not only the situation for those lunatics who were picked up from the streets and admitted into the asylum but also for those who were admitted by their family friends or by other acquaintances. According to James Wise, a wandering lunatic picked up by the police could hardly give any account of himself or herself. At the same time relatives were so 'ignorant and unobservant of dates' that exact details were impossible to procure.⁵ The 'natives' were criticised as ignorant and uneducated, which according to the medical officers resulted in the absence of prior case histories.

At a time when there were very few insignificant references of the social background of women admitted in the asylums, the official reports on lunatic asylums got the situation complicated by introducing the term 'unknown'. This category of 'unknown' was a hindrance for the asylum physicians in not only knowing the social background of many lunatics admitted in the asylums but they also found it difficult to acquire knowledge of the prior case histories of many who fell into this category. The official reports on insanity confirmed that many women fell into this category.

Prior case histories were significant because it often helped the asylum physicians to begin with the treatment of lunatics no sooner they were admitted into the asylums, but in its absence lunatics were put under observations and were treated accordingly. It therefore, often delayed not only the beginning of the treatment but also chances of their recovery. During the nineteenth century when the definitions of insanity was constructed, and the category of the 'unknown' complicated the matter, the situation got even more difficult when the medical practitioners attempted to

define male insanity as different from female insanity. In order to understand women's insanity therefore, it is also necessary to know how the medical officers defined insanity in general.

Women in the European Lunatic Asylum

The situation of women at the European Lunatic Asylum was different from that of the 'native' women. This difference was not based on an understanding of her 'deranged state of mind', rather on the issue of class divisions. In the European Lunatic Asylum, women of upper, middle and pauper classes were admitted. They were usually maintained by their friends, relatives or acquaintances unlike in the 'native' asylums where lunatics were maintained at the expenses of the Government. Some of the case studies regarding women in the European Asylum showed how, during several situations they underwent difficulties due to this transfer from the upper to the lower class rooms of the asylums. This transfer was often done due to lack of sufficient funds, particularly on instances when the families, friends or relatives of the upper class patients refused to pay for the lunatic's further maintenance in the asylum. Therefore, European women faced several problems on admission, other than their physical and mental illnesses, which had already enervated their physical strength. Within that situation they also had to get accustomed to the new place of confinement on admission. Finally, a change of life style caused due to the shift from upper class to lower class worsened the situation.

Number of women admitted at the European Lunatic Asylum was not only less in comparison to the number of men admitted at the asylum it was also far less than the number of women admitted in the 'native' asylums. This was because of the obvious reason that there were many 'native' asylums while on the contrary there was only one European Lunatic Asylum in Bengal. Another reason, as stated by R. Bird, the Superintendent of the Asylum was that the number of European men in India was much greater than the number of European women.⁶ Of the total number of Europeans and Eurasians treated at European Lunatic Asylum, 80 were men and 21 were women. Amongst the East Indians, 10 were men and 13 were women. Amongst the Europeans, however, 64 were men and only 8 were women. The difference, according to the Superintendent, was because the number of European men in India was much greater than the number of European women.⁷ This was true because most of the European men admitted in the Asylum were soldiers of the Company and later the Crown. By making a comparison between numbers of men and women the medical officer of the Asylum tried to point out that although fewer women were admitted, insanity was in no way a rare occurrence amongst European women in India.

Causes of Insanity: An Attempt to understand the Difference between Male and Female Insanity

Intoxication was considered as one of the most significant causes of insanity among men. Although the asylum reports often stated the number of women whose causes of intemperance was assigned to substance consumption, however, the officials did not consider it as a major cause of insanity among women. For instance, in 1835 at the Dacca Asylum in case of most of the male lunatics' insanity was found to originate in dissipation, especially in the habitual and excessive use of intoxicating liquors and drugs. There were instances of relapses amongst such kind of patients. Official records cited instances where a man who was discharged after being perfectly sane for several months at the asylum, returned in a state of raging insanity three or four days afterwards due to the re consumption of *bhang* or *ganja*.⁸

The cause of insanity among both men and women, according to the Superintendent of Moorshedabad Asylum in 1842, was physiological.

That was when one or more of the mental powers or manifestations were abysmal owing to the derangement either organic or functional of the cerebral centre on which that manifestation depend.⁹

A similar view about the physical causes of insanity was also held in 1842 by the Superintendent of the Dacca Lunatic Asylum. The physical causes of insanity at the Asylum in order of their 'frequency of occurrence' were *ganja*, opium, epilepsy, intemperance and heredity.¹⁰ The Superintendent assumed that since women were less addicted to *ganja* smoking than males, the numbers were fewer. He also emphasised the fact that in India almost 'no females excepting such as belong to the lower classes would generally be allowed to visit a public hospital'.¹¹

The medical officers had repeatedly expressed their discontent over the fact that it was exceedingly difficult to obtain correct information of the causes of lunacy among those admitted in the lunatic asylums because lunatics were seldom accompanied to the asylum by anyone who had any 'knowledge of the matter'.¹² This was true for both men and women. But throughout the nineteenth century, in various medical reports the medical officers asserted the fact that this situation was more frequent for women. On this, Superintendent A. Payne stated that it was difficult to assign causes of insanity amongst asylum inmates in India than in England. In India, he observed reluctance amongst the patients to speak of their hereditary background and to disclose the habits which had preceded the onset of the problem. Therefore, he was apprehensive of the fact that 'error might rise from mistaking those practices as causes of insanity, which were otherwise only its first manifestations'.¹³

The Superintendent of the Patna Lunatic Asylum stated that women

lunatics admitted in the asylum suffered from chronic symptoms, which often resulted in a state of dementia. He too considered physical illnesses as the cause of insanity. But what he found problematic was the increasing physical illnesses over time, which often resulted in a mental disease. According to him, 'organic disease was often present, and they were less curable as regards their mental condition'.¹⁴ Therefore, they were more liable to fall victims to ordinary disease than cases of acute mania. Justifying the need to send in the lunatics at an early stage, the Superintendent further stated that the mental diseases like other diseases were expected to be cured with a comparative ease at an early stage. Therefore, it was important to send in all lunatics at an early stage for treatment, otherwise there would be a great increase in the number of permanently insane persons throughout the province.¹⁵ The physicians wanted an early admission of the lunatics not only because they wanted to cure insanity at its earliest stage but they also feared that late admissions might complicate the situation and delay the treatment.

Amongst many European women resident in India, W. J. Moore pointed out that they suffered from 'uterine disease' due to 'climatorial influences'.¹⁶ Moore who was an European physician and wrote on diseases prevalent in India during the time wrote that it happened because 'young females' during their long voyages to India got emotional on leaving England and their home, this was followed by 'excitement consequent on a succession of new scenes, and sea sickness, before the menstrual function'.¹⁷ In addition to this he further stated,

there is frequently exposure to chilling winds and moisture, neglect of suitable clothing, the tedious and fatigue of a long march up country, and, lastly, the early marriages so constantly negotiated, all powerful agents to disturb the uterine, nervous, and vascular system.¹⁸

The 'mental emotion and vomiting along with it led to the delay in 'established or un established catamenial flow'.¹⁹ Amongst the 'native' women, he stated, early marriages before the 'thorough development' of the sexual organs often led to diseases of the womb. This illustrated that European physicians established the onset, even, or uneven flow of menses as a significant reason associated with mental illnesses among women. The lack of medical writing and discussions on women's mental health in the nineteenth century by the medical practitioners of India left it impossible to know their opinion on the association of menstrual cycle with women's insanity. Moore specifically pointed out that 'the influence of tropical climates on the rise and progress of uterine disease does not appear to have received that attention, which the subject demands from Indian medical authors'.²⁰ This explained the attempt to impose similar views in understanding mental illnesses amongst both European and 'native' women.

In 1835, in a report on the Insane Hospital of Dinajpore, J. Marshall, the Superintending Surgeon, expressed his doubts about reaching any accurate conclusion as to the comparative frequency of insanity among men and women. According to him, the 'middle life period of women was most obnoxious to insanity'. He was of the opinion that puerperal²¹ mania was common in India. According to medical reports, women usually faced this problem after laborious and difficult child birth. There were very few references to puerperal mania in the asylums of Bengal. According to the medical officers, it was more frequent among women in the European Asylums than among women of the 'native' asylums. According to the English physician, James Reid,

the term puerperal insanity is not only understood to imply aberration of the mind, or derangement of the cerebral functions in the puerperal state itself, but to include those attacks which occurs sometimes during the period of gestation, as well as those which we more frequently meet with few months after parturition, whilst the patient is suckling her infant.²²

According to Thomas A. Wise, Surgeon of the Dacca Lunatic Asylum, 'the variety of mental derangement incident to women soon after parturition seems to be less common in Bengal than in Europe'.²³ According to the Superintending Surgeon, as no 'decent' family permitted their women to be confined in a public asylum, he was frequently consulted by the local people of Dinajpore to treat their female relatives at home. This explained that there were incidents of women suffering from puerperal fever outside the asylum as well. The Superintendent found it difficult to conclude of the extent of such cases in Bengal, because amongst those who were admitted into the asylum it was not frequent and among those outside the asylum, he did not treat that many cases to reach a definite conclusion. According to Yannick Ripa, women with puerperal fever or mania either suffered from 'intense depression or acute frenzy'.²⁴ Elaine Showalter while pointing out the frequent occurrences of puerperal insanity in England stated, 'it seemed to violate all of Victorian culture's most deeply cherished ideals of feminine propriety and maternal love'.²⁵ In Bengal, the issue of puerperal mania did not limit itself to the question of maintaining or breaking the norms of femininity. Instead it pointed to a more complicated medical issue. It raised certain questions about the treatment of women's illnesses: for instance, what led to so many cases of puerperal mania or fever? Was it related to hygiene? Did women give birth in unhygienic conditions? Therefore, this particular cause of women's insanity questions both her reproductive and mental health. While much was done about women's reproductive health, through the Dufferin Fund towards the end of the nineteenth century, the issue of

women's mental health was never taken into serious consideration by the European medical officers of the time. Therefore, no special fund was arranged for the treatment of lunatic women.

Of the other causes mentioned by the physicians, consumption of *ganja*, hereditary, epilepsy, puerperal fever, were categorised as physical causes, whereas grief or domestic problems were classified as moral causes. Anger, passion, melancholia, acute mania, intemperance were classified as emotional causes of her insanity. By 1865, the causes of insanity among women lunatics of Dacca remained largely 'unknown' other than few instances of anger, passion, grief, loss of property, epilepsy, *ganja*, hereditary, and congenital tendencies. The diseases from which they suffered from were mainly chronic mania and dementia. Reasons for complications among the remaining lunatic women were syphilis in two and paralysis in one and 'cachexia' with the rest.²⁶ According to Superintendent James Wise, 'cachexia' depicted a general deterioration of health. The recovery of 'cachexia' became uncertain when combined with other diseases, an inmate became prone to it in the asylum. Therefore, the practice was to take into account the most prominent disease on admission into hospital and enter it on the monthly register. In the course of the illness the patient could be affected by other diseases and the one under which the patient was admitted was probably not the reason for the lunatic's death.²⁷

Another disease which often caused the death of women lunatics was known as 'asthenia'. The report of the number of women admitted at the Dullunda Asylum in 1865 reflected maximum death amongst women was due to 'asthenia'. Superintendent A. Payne explained it as that condition where an inmate died of physical exhaustion without assignable organic cause and unattended by marked anaemia or other evidence of blood disorder. He further stated that,

it expressed only a state of slow general innutrition due to impairment of cerebral function, as the final general exhaustion of Bright's diseases, phthisis, and much other chronic affection would be rightly termed the asthenia of those diseases, and distinguished from specific causes of death immediately arising out of the visceral disease present. The term "exhaustion of mania", on the other hand, is applied to cases where the suspension of function is directly fatal, and finds its parallel in the uroemic convulsion of Bright's disease, the fatal syncope of a fatty heart.²⁸

The causes of insanity were determined by the medical officers from the prior case studies of lunatics and from their class composition, which included the 'peculiar habits, customs and feelings of the 'natives' of the country'.²⁹ By 1870, the cases admitted at the Dacca Asylum were for the most part either those of acute mania, when the lunatics were violent or dangerous,

or cases of long standing chronic mania resulting in dementia, and of dementia itself. The 'natives', according to the medical officers of the asylums, were very reluctant to send their relatives to a lunatic asylum, for anything other than cases of acute mania. The Superintendent of the Dacca Asylum stated that they seldom received lunatics for treatment at the onset of their illnesses, when it was easier for them to treat such cases successfully. He regretted the fact that it was only when insanity showed itself in its violent forms, and the lunatic was uncontrollable, or when the disease was so far advanced that the person was no longer able to share the work of the household, or had become incapable of taking care of himself or herself, that his relatives sent him or her to the asylum.³⁰ This complicated the situation and delayed treatment. The intention of the medical officers was to treat the maximum number of cases admitted in the asylums and release them. But such instances not only deferred treatment it often led to an increase in the asylum population. The reason for this the Superintendent thought was that the 'natives' perceived asylums as a place in which 'troublesome or helpless lunatics' were taken care of, rather than as an institution in which the disorders of the intellect to some extent could be successfully treated as well.³¹

By 1871, according to James Wise, melancholia was very common among 'natives'. Males, he further stated were more subject to it than females. Religious melancholia was not found among Bengalis, except among those 'natives' who had converted to Christianity. Religious exaltation was not uncommon. It was generally characterised by great self complacency and vanity. The individual asserted that he was 'holier and more favoured of the deity than other men that he could call down the judgement of God on the human race, or that he saw his patron god at night and communed with him'.³²

The cause of insanity due to consumption of intoxicating substances, particularly *ganja*, was contested by medical professionals throughout the nineteenth century. Until the establishment of Indian Hemp Drug Commission in 1893, the medical officers were in doubt about the relationship between *ganja* and insanity. An interesting conundrum about *ganja* smoking, which the medical officers could not solve, was that whether it was reasonable to suppose that excessive *ganja* smoking was due to insanity, or insanity was due to excessive use of *ganja*.³³

Although the European medical officers mentioned certain cases of insanity among women which were due to the consumption of intoxicating substances like *bhang*, *ganja* or *charas*, yet some of them also argued that the consumption of intoxicating substances was not the real cause of insanity. In 1886, A.J.Cowie, Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, Bengal in his annual report on the insane asylums stated that women 'did not acquire the *bhang*,

ganja, or *charas* habits and for *obvious* (italics mine) reasons'.³⁴ Instead he pointed out that the majority of the cases of intoxication admitted into the asylum included young or middle aged men. He pointed out that it was a social taboo for a woman to consume such substances. This was an attempt to guard the notion of a righteous woman who would not indulge in such activities. They tried to refer to the norms of feminine behaviour by putting forth such ideas. At a time when women's' insanity was not much talked about and not many women were admitted into the asylum, the cause of insanity among women due to substance consumptions complicated the issue. It broke the pattern of visualising women as an epitome of moral values, derived from notions of an ideal upper class Victorian woman. The idea was to understand the colonised people in terms of Victorian norms of values and moral issues. Such assumptions by the medical officers somewhere blurred the class divisions. Women admitted in the 'native' asylums by and large belonged to the 'lower' classes of the society, whereas the officers tried to implement values of upper class Victorian women on them.

Drs J. Wise and J. Coates, the two Superintendents of Dacca and Moydapore Asylums respectively during 1872, stated that Indian hemp was in many cases erroneously credited with madness. They further stated that this drug had little or no influence as an incentive to crime. The proportion of *ganja*, resulting in insanity among criminals, was lower than among non criminal lunatics. Dr. Wise stated that thieves and murderers smoked hemp in order to nerve themselves for criminal deeds. But the drug was not especially capable of arousing any homicidal or criminal propensities.³⁵ In 1884, in the report on the lunatic asylums of Bengal, the causes of insanity were mainly attributed to the use of *ganja* and spirit. In this connection the Inspector General made the following remarks,

One woman is set down as having suffered from the effects of bhang (Dullunda), while opium is alleged to have caused mental disease in another (Patna). Yet opium is said to be extensively consumed by both sexes in some districts. Spirits as a cause of insanity is largely represented. No mention, notwithstanding this, is made of 'alcoholism' or 'delirium tremens' in any of the returns.³⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century with the progress in the treatment and understanding of insanity, the Inspector General of Hospitals often got critical of the Superintendents' views. It was a time when the medical officers disapproved of any possible co relation between hemp and insanity which they had earlier agreed upon. He doubted the correctness of assigning so many cases to excessive drinking. Hence, he considered such analyses of causes of insanity by the Superintendents as mere 'guess work'.³⁷

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the method of classifying different forms of insanity underwent revision with the object of securing some uniformity of classification. But, as pointed out by the Inspector General, it was impossible to expect absolute accuracy and uniformity, since the diagnosis depended almost entirely on the views held by individual Superintendents. It was well known how 'prone some persons were to ascribe *ganja* as a fertile cause of insanity, while others considered it a rather innocuous kind of stimulant'.³⁸ Regarding *ganja* smokers or other inebriates, A. Payne stated that 'their resort to a stimulant was an effect and not a genuine cause of mental failure'.³⁹

Consumption of *ganja* was considered by the medical officers as one of the important causes of insanity. It seemed that whenever a lunatic was reported by the police to be a *ganja* smoker, it was easily assumed that the drug was the cause of insanity. The Lieutenant Governor agreed with Dr. Harvey, the Inspector General of Hospitals in thinking that in past years many cases were attributed to *ganja* on most insufficient grounds. Therefore, by 1894, the whole question of the effect of the consumption of this drug upon the social and moral condition of the people was put under the consideration of the Hemp Drugs Commission. Dr. Harvey was convinced that their report would doubtless show to what extent the use of hemp drugs was the cause of lunacy.⁴⁰

In 1872, according to the Inspector General of Hospitals, the proportion of acute insanity was lower among females than among males. The ratio of recovery and improvement was much higher in acute rather than in chronic insanity. The death rate was highest in acute dementia, which resulted from melancholia, acute mania, chronic dementia and chronic mania. Alexander Wise made some observations on the phases of insanity. According to him, mental depression culminating in suicide was very common among both Muslims and Hindus. This was because 'natives' functioned mostly under the influence of 'emotion' unlike the Europeans.⁴¹

According to James Wise, Superintendent of Dacca Lunatic Asylum, depression was very common among 'natives' and it often resulted in suicidal tendencies. Among those treated during 1871, one Muslim female, three Hindu males, and one Hindu female, had attempted to commit suicide before admission. Two Muslim males and three Hindu males attempted to commit suicide since they came to the asylum.⁴² He further stated that grief over the loss of children or parents, and anxiety was the most frequent moral causes of insanity among 'natives'. Sixteen women out of a total of forty six women admitted at the Dacca Asylum during the year were reported to be mad due to the loss of family members. Only thirty three out of two hundred and fourteen males were affected in a similar manner. Even by 1872

debauchery was understood as a moral cause of insanity. James Wise by 1872 stated that intoxication alone was not the cause of insanity; instead insanity was the result of a combination of causes.

The wild, reckless, and irregular life, and the feeling of self degradation, was probably more to do with the production of insanity than the sensuality and depravity of their lives.⁴³

In 1872, in the European Lunatic Asylum, the moral causes of insanity included pecuniary difficulties and domestic troubles. Of the four patients admitted in the Asylum during the year, three men and one woman suffered from such moral causes. Five women died during child birth. Amongst the rest of the women admitted during the year there were instances of puerperal mania and imbecility. The uncertainty over the understanding of insanity was thus expressed by the Superintendent:

It was not to be understood that all cases could be so strictly classified with accuracy; for it was difficult in many cases to decide what name the disease should bear, and this for the reason, that the manifestations of the disease in many persons are characteristic of more than one variety. For instance, it was not easy to say in many cases whether the disease was chronic mania, or acute mania, for the time comparatively quiescent; chronic mania or dementia; chronic mania, with fixed delusion or melancholia, liable to lapse into mania. The nomenclature, in most instances, was only approximately correct.⁴⁴

Within such uncertainties about the definitions of insanity it is necessary to read some of the case studies that defined women's insanity.

Case Studies

The irregular flow of menstrual cycle was considered as one of the most important cause of women's insanity. The medical officers often regarded a woman as sane when she had her menstrual flow regularly and a woman as insane when she got irregular menses. The following are some of the case studies of women who were diagnosed as insane. It reflects their social background, the diagnoses of their problems and the treatment that followed in case of both 'native' and European lunatic women.

Mussumat Komalle was admitted at Dacca Lunatic Asylum on 12 April, 1842. She was thirty five years old and was of *chandal* caste. Komalle was a prostitute. She was under medical treatment at the Native Hospital for a bowel complaint when she first showed symptoms of mental derangement. The symptoms were her singing and talking to herself and her annoying other patients by seizing their bedding and clothes. She became dull and languid and was disinclined to move or speak after her admission. Her catamenia, this was the term used instead of menstrual cycle in the official writings on

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asylums, was irregular. Aloetic and Myrrh pills were prescribed to her. Menstruation commenced on 1 June, 1842 and there was a gradual improvement in her health. She was engaged in asylum labour and was discharged as cured on 17 May.

Mussumat Alta was admitted on 5 February, 1842 at the age of forty. She was the wife of a peasant. She was very violent at the time of her admission. She tore her clothes and blankets into shreds. Her tongue was discoloured, which indicated a diseased secretion. Tartar emetic solutions and purgatives were prescribed. Her menses was irregular. She was given dosages of aloetic and myrrah pills. Aloetic pills were made of aloe, a plant, mainly used as purgatives, and myrrah helped in healing wounds and ulcers. Her catamenia reappeared on 16 July. The moment her menstrual cycle got regular, the physicians concluded that she had begun to improve. She became quiet, and amused herself with picking up straw and pieces of bricks. She was subsequently employed in work in the hospital such as arranging bedding of the patients, carrying their dinner from the kitchen and cleaning dishes. She was discharged as cured on the 17 December.

Mussumat Omrah was admitted at the age of thirty on 22 January. She used to sit idly in her house and refused to eat. She was apparently in a state of deep *melancholy* prior to her admission into hospital. She attempted to set fire to a house after which she was sent to the *thanah* and then to the asylum. She was epileptic and had four attacks a day since her admission to the hospital. She also had an attack of fever and bilious diarrhoea. Her catamenia was regular. She gradually became weak and emaciated. Tonics including nitrates of silver were administered. She died on 15 December from coma following a fit of epilepsy.⁴⁵ Therefore, while epilepsy was treated, her *melancholia*, fever and diarrhoea were not taken into consideration.

Mussumat Anundo, a prostitute, was admitted in the Dacca Asylum on 5 March, 1842. She was nineteen years old. Anundo was sent from Mymensingh because she abused people. She was apparently wandering around the countryside. On her admission, she indulged in immoderate fits of singing, crying and dancing. She tore her clothes into pieces. Her catamenia was suppressed. Aloetic and myrrh pills were prescribed to her. Menstruation recommenced on 22 May and she began to improve. During her convalescence she spun thread, cleaned cotton, and occasionally amused herself. She was discharged as cured on 25 September. Catamenia or the regular flow of menstrual cycle, often determined the understanding of women's insanity. According to the physicians, as long as her menstrual cycle remained regular, the physicians expected recovery. This kind of an understanding of women's insanity was also seen in other case studies. Elaine Showalter has pointed out that 'doctors argued that the menstrual discharge

in itself predisposed women to insanity. Either an abnormal quantity or quality of the blood, according to this theory, could affect the brain. Therefore, physicians attempted to control the blood by diet and venesection'.⁴⁶

Instances of women admitted in the European Lunatic Asylum revealed the class composition along with diagnoses and treatment of the insanity by the physicians. Although there was not much dissimilarity in understanding their insanity with the 'native' women but the instances below shows that even prior case histories, lack of which was criticised in case of 'native' lunatics as a hindrance to treatment, was insufficient for proper treatment of women lunatics.

Mrs. Adam, wife of Sergeant Adam of His Majesty's 14th Foot Regiment, was admitted to the Hospital on 7 October 1810. When admitted she was in a deranged state of mind. Within three weeks she was diagnosed as completely cured and was about to be discharged from the Hospital by the medical examiners.⁴⁷ The state of derangement was not a clear explanation of insanity. This kind of explanation was used in many other cases also, but not all of them were released so early. The medical officers probably tried to claim that deranged state could be cured and discharged if treated in time. Another significant aspect which determined the treatment of lunatic women at the European Asylum was the financial aspect. Failure to pay for their patients by the friends, acquaintances or the family members often made the lunatic women suffer in the Asylum.

Mrs. Gopert was admitted in a state of derangement into the Insane Hospital in Calcutta on 13 April 1813, by her husband Captain Gopert of the Country Service.⁴⁸ For a period of one year her husband paid for her expenses until he went on a journey in command of a ship and the asylum did not receive any news from him. In his absence she was taken care of by the Surgeon of the Hospital, who paid for her treatment from his own pay. In 1816, the Surgeon appealed to the Medical Board to relieve him from the charges. He expressed his consideration for her 'unhappy' state and about the fact that she had no relatives or friends to take care of her and requested the Board to apply to the Government for her maintenance at the asylum. Mrs. Gopert's derangement was described by the Surgeon as violent and unmanageable. He further stated that Mrs. Gopert was a 'Gentlewoman', which he concluded from her habits and education. Therefore, according to him it would neither be 'proper nor humane to place her on the footing of the lower class of patients'.⁴⁹ The Medical Board in a letter to the Chief Secretary to Government requested Mrs Gopert to be maintained as an upper class patient.⁵⁰ 'Violent and unmanageable' were terms used to describe her insanity but they did not exactly state what kind of physical or mental

problem led to that state. Therefore, even with proper case studies the physicians were not always capable of treating insanity.

Europeans were sent back to England after a short duration of their stay at the Asylum. It was considered by the medical practitioners that further improvement was not possible in India because of the climatic conditions. For instance, the Medical Board decided to send Mrs. Ann Hartley back home after her stay at the European Insane Hospital for a period of approximately three months, from November 1820. She was not cured and was sent out with other lunatic men on the ship *Mary*.⁵¹ It was decided by the Board that she would be placed in a cabin room separately on board because of her violent and refractory nature, along with a female keeper. Mrs. Hartley was the widow of a soldier. Nothing was known of her birth or parentage. She was violent and had a tendency to hurt her self.⁵² She had two children. One child was with her in the asylum and the other was admitted into the Orphan School. Once her journey back home was decided, the Board decided to admit her other child who was with her to be admitted in the Orphan School, as the child was entitled to get the benefits which the orphan of a soldier in the Company's army was fully entitled to.⁵³

In another similar instance where the patient was sent back to England, the Medical Board stated that Mrs Pollard was ready to board the ship to return to England for further treatment in January 1829.⁵⁴ The statement of case prepared during her stay in the asylum and also sent to England stated Mrs. Pollard a person of 'choleric' temperament. She was of middle stature and was very stout. Her exact age was not known and it was assumed that she was between 30 to 40 years of age. She had been addicted to spirituous liquors since the death of her husband. This propensity becoming a confirmed habit she exhibited symptoms of madness. She was sent to the asylum from the Upper Provinces of India. At the date of her admission in February 1828, she exhibited an appearance of complete idiocy, laughing and crying alternately and talking in the most silly and incoherent manner. Mrs. Pollard's propensity for drinking was on her mind but she did not dwell long on the subject when she could not obtain it. Her physical health was considered good and she was manageable since the state of her mind improved but she was silly and imbecile. She occasionally complained of headache and was administered with the required dosage of purgatives for constipation. By January 1829 she was perfectly tranquil.⁵⁵ The Board failed to find out further details about her. They assumed that she was married to one Mr. Pollard in India of whom they had no information. She did not have any relatives or friends in India. The Board stated that she had seven sisters in England, but none of her sisters or any other relatives or friends tried to contact her.⁵⁶

Mary MacDonald, wife of John Mac Donald of the Corps in Dinapore

Division, was sent to the European Asylum from Dinapore with an escort of a sepoy and two European female attendants. Medical case of the woman was written by Surgeon J. Mouat. This was sent to the officers of Medical Board.⁵⁷ Mary Mac Donald was 28 years old. She had stayed in India for a year before her admission. She was of a melancholic temperament with a 'wild and peculiar look'. She was in a state of mental derangement since she had disembarked from the ship in 1827. Since that time she had been violent and outrageous. Hence, she frequently visited the hospital for medical treatment. Finally, on 10 February 1829, when she was admitted into the hospital at Dinapore, she had a 'wild staring look and great loquacity as well as incoherency of speech'. According to her husband, she was frequently 'deranged and violent'. Her pulse beat was counted to be 130, face flushed, eyes wild due to the effect of vine sections, purgatives, and calomel. She got better and was discharged 3 March 1829; but was again readmitted on 7 March in a most violent and delirious state. Since then she was either in that state sullen or sulky and referring to answer questions, or at times rational, though her countenance did not lose its wild peculiar look. She was bled with leeches placed on her head, cold effusions were applied, blisters were applied on the head and neck, and powerful purgatives like calomel were applied to affect the mouth. The strait jacket was used to restrain her. All this gave her temporary relief, and after being quiet and rational for five or six days she became suddenly loquacious, and violent. She destroyed her clothes, disturbed the patients and endeavoured to set fire to the hospital. From the repeated relapses and the peculiar wild look, Surgeon J. Mouat, under whose treatment she was admitted in the hospital, considered her as incurable, or nearly so. She was considered unfit to remain in Dinapore any longer. Moreover, according to the Surgeon, she might be dangerous if left behind in the barracks.⁵⁸ This case illustrated the fact that medical treatment, analysis and understating of insanity of the time were similar whether in the asylums or outside in a hospital. Given that such symptoms repeatedly occurred, a longer treatment in a confined place was considered suitable by the medical practitioners of the time. Hence they were sent to the Asylums.

Women vs. Male Insanity: A Case of Constant Comparison or Contest?

The reasons of insanity were both compared and contested in India along with Britain. The physicians of the Asylums constantly made comparisons and came to the conclusion that the number of women at the asylums of Bengal was always lower than the number of men. In 1835, at the Insane Hospital of Calcutta, the average age of males when admitted was twenty five years while that of women was twenty years. The number of women as compared to men was 1 to 3 or 4. Based on these records reflecting on the

proportion of the sexes, the Superintendent Surgeon stated that insanity in reality was more frequent amongst males than amongst females of the country.⁵⁹ Even four decades later the condition was almost similar; women constituted 21.5 per cent of the admissions in the asylums of Bengal by 1871, against 23.6 of 1870 and 20.8 of the five preceding years.⁶⁰

In 1871, J. Campbell, the Inspector General of Hospitals stated that in the Asylums of England the population of insane women generally exceeded the number of males, whereas in Bengal, the number of women admitted in the asylums constituted only twenty two per cent of the total. The number of female patients treated in the hospitals (not mental hospitals) and dispensaries of Bengal, contributed to twenty six per cent of the population. As the number of women treated for their illnesses outside the asylums was higher than of those in the asylum, he presumed that

whatever the relative amount of male and female population of Bengal, or the relative number of lunatics among males and females, the people are more loath to send females to asylums, and contrive to manage them at home.⁶¹

This according to him was because the 'custom of the country (India) was opposed to sending women either to hospitals or asylums'.⁶²

The number of female admitted in the Moorshedabad Asylum in 1842 was not above 1/6 or 1/7 of the male numbers, while in Europe the former predominated.⁶³ Insanity due to substance consumption like liquor or hemp was categorised as moral causes of insanity. In Europe men were more subject to this moral cause of insanity than women. At Dacca by 1835, the proposition of males to females was 4 to 1 respectively. This, according to the Superintendent, led to an uncertain indication of the relative frequency of insanity in the sexes. Certain circumstances made this deduction 'doubtful'. He condemned the 'habits' of the 'natives', which he thought was responsible for this difference. He believed that insanity was as common among women as it was among men. He claimed that to save the honour of families, women in a 'state of derangement' were often kept under restraint at home.⁶⁴

Most of the women of the 'native' lunatic asylums during 1862 suffered from mania, acute mania, with one or two cases of dementia or monomania and melancholia.⁶⁵ Mania or monomania was not common to women only, many male lunatics also suffered from it. In fact, the report of the Moorshedabad Lunatic Asylum showed that there were more cases of mania among men than among female lunatics. A. Fleming stated that the cause of insanity in most of the lunatics at the Moorshedabad Asylum was due to dysentery and consumption of *ganja* or liquor. The reason, why many of the patients admitted in the Asylum were found in a weak and debilitated state was because, they belonged to the poorest class of the community. He further

stated that none of the 'better' classes was willing to send the patient for treatment at the asylum; instead, they preferred to treat them in their own ways at home.⁶⁶ Therefore, both men and women suffered from the similar causes of insanity. However, some of the medical officers tried to make a distinction in understanding insanity of women as separate from men's.

According to J. Fullarton, of the moral causes, grief, particularly amongst women was the principal cause of insanity in the asylums of Bengal by 1876. Next in 'order' were anger, religion, poverty and love which were also considered as important reasons of insanity among women. Of the total number of women treated in the asylums of Bengal, 45.73 percent suffered from insanity caused by physical causes, 7.93 percent from moral causes, and 46.33 percent from unknown causes.⁶⁷ According to Superintendent Payne of Dullunda Asylum, dysentery, fever, diseases of the nervous system, and phthisis, covered sixty percent of the total admissions amongst the male patients, while amongst the women, diseases of the nervous system, dysentery, cholera and fevers contributed more than half of the admission.⁶⁸ He further stated that another very troublesome affliction among the women, whose cause and prevention formed a problem to be solved, was the presence of a large quantity of intestinal round worms. This sometimes caused fatal injury, and at times it become a source of perplexity.⁶⁹

John Haslam, nineteenth century European physician, who was in charge of several mad houses in England, stated that insanity was more frequent in men than among women. Women, according to him, were more prone to insanity because of certain natural processes, which they undergo, like menstruation, parturition, and for preparing nutriment for the infant along with certain diseases from which they suffer during those times.⁷⁰ In 1835, his view was refuted by J. Swiney of the Medical Board in India. According to him, Haslam's views were applicable for understanding female insanity in England, but they were difficult to assume the same in case of 'native' women of India. He further stated that

our want of more general seclusion of females adopted in this country precludes our getting correct information or making an accurate comparison upon this point but the females who are admitted into our presidency insane hospital are few in number as compared with the males.⁷¹

Following Swiney's comment it could be concluded that in England not only case histories of patients after admission were regularly maintained, but most of them were admitted along with a prior case history. But in India it was not possible. Most of the lunatics admitted in the 'native' asylums of Bengal mainly belonged to the poorer sections of the society. They were not necessarily admitted by their friends, family or relatives. In most of the cases

they were picked up from the street by *chowkidars* or police. Therefore, it was difficult to state whether insanity was more frequent among men than among women in India. Swiney did not look at insanity as only a consequence of pain or mere suffering but as one, which was an 'independent and associated effect of the general diseases'. Although he admitted to the fact that it was difficult to conclude 'in our present state of contracted knowledge' about insanity, yet he at the same time he could not ignore the fact that 'mental functions may possibly be disturbed by similar causes to those which disturb the bodily functions'.⁷²

The proportion of admission of women lunatics at the asylums in England was always higher than the number of men admitted into it. For instance, the data collected for England and Wales by the Royal Commissioners in Lunacy suggested that institutionalised women outnumbered men in 1880, by about 7,000. The total number of women was 39,027 and that of men were 32, 027.⁷³ This was not the situation for India and particularly not so in Bengal.⁷⁴

According to Waltraud Ernst,

the phenomenon that women are more likely than men to be diagnosed as mentally unstable has become part of feminist orthodox in the West.⁷⁵

In 1862, the Superintending Surgeon of Moorshedabad, after judging the reports of the lunatic asylums in England concluded that women there were as much, and even more subject to this malady than males. But according to him, this increase in the proportion of women lunatics in England had no correlation with admission of women in the asylums of Bengal.⁷⁶ Elaine Showalter in her book on *The Female Malady*⁷⁷ pointed out that in England insanity was more popular than it was in India and, 'alongside the English malady, nineteenth century psychiatry described a female malady'. She further stated that 'even when both men and women had similar symptoms of mental disorder, psychiatry differentiated between an English malady, associated with the intellectual and economic pressures on highly civilised men, and a female malady, associated with the sexuality and essential nature of women'.⁷⁸ In India and particularly in Bengal not only the term 'female malady' could not be applied to specifically define the madness of women, the number of women admitted was also lower than what it was in England.

In Bengal, insanity was common among both men and women. In the mental hospitals of England and Europe, proper records with case studies were maintained of the number of lunatics admitted. In India or in Bengal many women were not sent into the asylum because insanity was considered as a social stigma. Women admitted existed only as numbers in the statistical records with hardly any references to their case studies, except in a few rare

instances. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that insanity was specifically a female malady. Insanity was of common occurrence. The complexity of the problem lay in the definition and in the understanding of the term 'insanity'. It is difficult to ignore that a gendered definition of insanity was in the making where women's insanity was explained more in terms of the condition of her emotional state, which at times was described as melancholic and distressed while at other times it was represented as violent and outrageous. The official understanding of her insanity was often related to her emotional exuberances, for instance, her ways of laughing, singing or talking to herself. It seemed that the medical officers assumed that women in general had no control over their emotions, which often caused insanity. Hence, they were more prone to it.

Conclusion

Therefore, to conclude it may be stated that insanity is a mental disease which can be medically treated. Women were prone to insanity as much as men were. The gendered definition of madness was the result of both biological differences, and also the outcome of imagined psycho-social factors, which viewed women as unsettled and prone to emotional exuberances. But that in reality is probably not the situation. In the absence of proper records on insane women admitted at the asylums, and also at a time when the various definitions of insanity based on the views of different medical officers were formulated in the asylums of India, it is difficult to conclude that insanity was particularly a 'female malady'. After all, as human beings, men are as emotional as women.

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Missionary Medicine and the 'Separatist Tradition'

An Analysis of the Missionary Encounter with Leprosy in Late Nineteenth-Century India

And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days where in the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without camp shall his habitation be.¹

While it is now widely accepted that leprosy 'cannot be caught by a handshake', surviving biblical imagery suggests that certain modes of thinking regarding this historically-loaded disease are almost impossible to dislodge.² Indeed, phrases such as 'avoid like a leper' and 'the leper's touch' are commonplace in our language indicating that even today leprosy retains a powerful symbolic resonance that distinguishes it from other diseases of the world. However, it has not been in a purely figurative fashion that those with leprosy have been singled out. In the late nineteenth century the infected 'leper' was among the many who found themselves subjected to the criminalising segregation policies that South Africa's Robben Island and Hawaii's Molokai have since become famous for.³ Ironically, it was this post-enlightenment era, the era that marked the birth of such notions as liberty and freedom that also came to spawn the 'definitively modern institutions of confinement' that sought to suppress those very same inalienable rights.⁴ In India, as in other parts of the world, segregation, criminalisation and stigmatisation became bound up with the leprosy-sufferer's experience. For the historian, however, the study of leprosy in this particular historical context makes for interesting work as it is a unique case on several counts. Mark Harrison, speaking of the disease in late nineteenth-century India explained that sufferers 'occupied an ambiguous status, somewhere between that of a patient and a prisoner.'⁵ In other words, because leprosy was somewhat of a medical enigma - its hazy understanding as laden with biblical connotations of sin and impurity as it had been in the Middle Ages - there was no clear government policy for dealing with it or its victims. Moreover, in this context missionaries operated independently, administering basic but vital medical care. Through their commitment to work 'among the lepers', missionaries forced the colonial government and the rest of the world to recognise leprosy as a public health issue, in turn

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sparkling greater scientific interest, new modes of investigation and the development of more effective treatments. It is for this reason, then, that missionaries should be regarded as pioneers in the field rather than the peripheral and 'itinerant evangelist' characters they are often taken for.⁶

However, while the dissemination of Western medicine in India has been a topic of constant interest and exploration, the study of missionaries and their encounter with leprosy is relatively uncharted territory.⁷ The little that has been said of this, furthermore, has tended to focus on the stigmatisation of sufferers. Zachary Gussow and T. Tracy in particular have likened the encounter between missionaries and leprosy-sufferers to a modern-day parable.⁸ While such reductive claims may serve as a lesson in the overuse of abstract language to refer to the experiences of disease across a vast range of differing social predicaments,⁹ it seems Gussow and Tracy were correct in pointing out that missionaries did, almost unanimously, endorse segregation policies in their asylums. This article seeks to ascertain why it was that the 'separatist tradition', to use Gussow's phrase, became the preferred policy amongst British Protestant missionaries in dealing with the problem of leprosy in colonial India.¹⁰ Working within a thirty-year timeframe, using A. G. Hansen's discovery of *bacillus leprae* in 1873 and the Government of India's 1898 Lepers Act as approximate points of reference, this article focuses on the writings and correspondence of a handful of individuals who offered their services to work 'among the lepers'.¹¹ The two autobiographical works of Wellesley Cosby Bailey, the Irish-born Protestant missionary and founder of the Mission to Lepers (ML), feature predominantly as they offer invaluable insight into the encounter across a wide geographical field.¹²

In opposition to the perspective that has seen missionary activity in India as a mere appendage to the British political agenda, 'simply imperialism by other means', it is here recognised that there was something driving missionaries that was distinct from the motivations of the colonising elite.¹³ However, as the work of Talal Asad has highlighted, the term 'agency' as we understand it today, as a type of independent and individual action, may not be applicable to a nineteenth-century missionary who saw themselves as being driven by Divine Providence.¹⁴ Rather than imposing a definitively modern understanding of agency on the past, this article discusses how missionaries themselves interpreted work 'among the lepers'. Indeed, it seems many in the field saw their role first and foremost as furthering the greater Christian cause of expanding God's kingdom on Earth. In this way, India became a site of experimentation for those missionaries who sought to create an indigenous and self-sustaining Christian community, a community in which institutions like the leprosy asylum were to play an increasingly vital role.

Moreover, specific changes in the mission-world, such as the recognition of 'Clinical Christianity' as a valuable tool for breaking down barriers of hostility and the rise of the 'Double Cure' as a respectable and effective means of proselytising, enabled the leprosy asylum to become a key site in the newly-constructed 'Native Christian Community'.¹⁵ With its promise of refuge and medical treatment the leprosy asylum not only served as a tangible expression of Christian charity in the 'great age of evangelical philanthropy', but also functioned as a corrective site, whereby in-patients subject to constant surveillance and ward-preaching were rendered increasingly open to the evangelising influence of the missionaries.¹⁶ Segregating those with leprosy and locating them within an isolated and regulated space was central to the evangelical enterprise of spreading 'the Word'. In offering one side to the late nineteenth-century encounter between missionaries and leprosy-sufferers, this article hopes to shed light on a largely unexcavated area of India's medical history.

Locating leprosy

However repulsive the disease itself in some of its phases may be, there is nothing, whatever of that nature about its study.¹⁷

The neglect of leprosy as a subject of interest and study, its 'repulsive' features or otherwise has continued to present an obstacle for the historian. In an attempt to explain this academic vacuum in the Indian context, it is first important to note that, because leprosy was never a top priority for the colonial government there is a considerable gap in official recordings relating to this disease. In terms of health care provision the precedence lay primarily with the welfare of the resident European community and the military, the 'ultimate guarantors of imperial rule'.¹⁸ It follows, then, that any studies of disease tended to focus on epidemic diseases such as smallpox and cholera, or, more simply, those diseases which claimed the lives of Europeans. Leprosy, on the other hand, a degenerative and for the most part 'native' disease was viewed as a mere nuisance, its wandering sufferer abhorred for being an eyesore more than anything else.¹⁹

Recognising the fact that the British Raj sidelined leprosy for more 'pressing' matters and that care for leprosy-sufferers lay largely outside official jurisdiction, it comes as a surprise to find that non-governmental efforts such as missionary work have been relatively neglected in the story so far.²⁰ What little has been said of mission work more generally, moreover, has tended to categorise it as an accessory to the political agenda of the British ruling elite. In light of Edward Said's seminal text, *Orientalism* and the fashionable application of Foucauldian frameworks of power/knowledge in its aftermath, there ensued a tidal wave of criticism which served to unmask

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the evangelists' imperial complicity.²¹ Catchphrases such as 'colonising the body' and 'tool of empire' have, as a result, become synonymous with the discussion on missionaries and their medical work in India.²² While it has been fruitful to challenge the central tenets of colonial historiography - namely the now abhorred 'civilising mission' - and to realise the deeply-penetrating impact of Western influence upon Indian society, a tendency for sweeping statements in historical works has served to lump together 'the West' into a single and united colonising force. Without allowing for the recognition of individual or group-specific motivations, this is arguably the very act of homogenising for which first-wave post-colonialists condemned orientalist scholars.

With the immediate rush of postcolonial criticism there also arrived an academic passion for abstract terminology which, as James Staples explained, has meant that much of the work on leprosy to date has been predicted in 'externally-defined, de-contextualised discourses'.²³ A focus on stigma in particular, by way of reducing a vast range of differing social explanations and processes into one 'catch-all explanation', has meant that the intricacies of each particular experience have been overlooked.²⁴ A vogue for concepts such as 'social control', 'stigma' and 'social exclusion' - which arguably began with Goffman and Foucault's sociological studies of the European mental asylum in the early 1960s - has, moreover, remained an integral part of the way in which the topic of leprosy has been approached by scholars.²⁵ Gussow and Tracy's relatively recent suggestion that missionaries made 'lepers' out of persons with leprosy as a result of their intervention, has implied that biblical leprosy was simply transported to the colonial field with little modification along the way.²⁶ Hansen's discovery of the *bacillus leprae* in 1873 and its impact on the perception of leprosy in the public sphere is a merely a peripheral consideration for the scholars. Arguably, there is an unmistakable discrepancy between the leprosy of the Bible - now acknowledged to have been a loose term used to describe a variety of skin diseases - and the rather specific and 'medicalised' disease of modern times.²⁷ Indeed, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century leprosy has been inextricably bound up with germ theory and notions of physical contamination. As Gilbert Lewis has quite rightly pointed out, 'the lamentable history of social attitudes towards leprosy is a lesson on the consequences of paying great attention to words, but small attention to facts'.²⁸

While steering clear of those homogenising tendencies associated with the discourse on social stigma, this article equally avoids using historically-loaded terms as 'leper' and 'the afflicted', drawing upon them only in their nineteenth-century usage. Considering the great stigma that is attached to leprosy to this day, the somewhat sterile term 'leprosy patient' is similarly rejected, for it misrepresents the all-encompassing nature of the disease.²⁹ The

term 'leprosy-sufferer', although by no means neutral, is used here as an alternative to the somewhat more problematic terms outlined above.

Moving beyond the immediate postcolonial period, it may be said that the real breakthroughs in historiography have come with the more interdisciplinary and nuanced studies that have surfaced in the last few decades. New perspectives, serving as supplementary *histories* rather than inversions of the colonial *history*, have been offered by those academics seeking to restore the 'lost voices' of India's past and have together offered a level of complexity hitherto unachieved. Sanjiv Kakar's study of the various forms of protest adopted by institutionalised leprosy patients is, by its own claim, the first comprehensive study of leprosy and its institutions in colonial India and forms a substantial attempt to restore the agency of the asylum inmate.³⁰ Not only has Kakar's focus on resistance, patient agency and the 'liberating aspects' of Western medicine provided a welcome and refreshing addition to the debate on Western medicine in India, but has also cast doubt upon the perspective which has seen the story of the leprosy asylum in India as a microcosm of the wider project of imperialism- a purely one-sided and 'colonial' affair.³¹

Jane Buckingham has also attempted to reverse the pattern of Eurocentric enquiry, by focusing on how the dual forces of local circumstances and patient resistance combined to modify policy towards leprosy-sufferers in the Madras Presidency.³² Buckingham's work is highly original on the count that it is among the first to use indigenous sources, which have been hitherto largely inaccessible to the historian. Moreover, by shedding light on indigenous treatments such as Gurjon oil and Chaulmugra seeds, it has marked the beginnings of a shift in historiography which no longer seems concerned with upholding the scientific superiority of the West, and can, more honestly, reveal a less confident side to Western medicine in India that has been long suppressed.³³

While no one work has specifically focused on the missionary-leprosy encounter in colonial India, bearing in mind the aforementioned scholarship on leprosy and the more general studies of mission work to date, the story can be pieced together. With regards to the scholarship on the missionary presence in the subcontinent, Christopher Harding's study, in particular, has raised important questions about the ways in which historians have spoken of 'the missionaries' as a homogenous entity.³⁴ It is important for the purposes of study, which operates partly on a biographical basis, to recognise the individuality of the missionary with whom it deals. However, bearing in mind the personal quality of missionary sources, there are certain methodological limitations that first require addressing. It appears missionaries often wrote with quite pragmatic considerations in mind,

matters of fundraising and bureaucracy which cumulatively make it considerably more difficult for the historian to gauge any underlying motivations. Coupled with the fact that even reading 'their own words' is somewhat limited in terms of really experiencing what the missionaries did, it is problematic to claim what was driving them at any given time.³⁵ As Wittgenstein's lectures on private experience have highlighted, the language one uses to convey experience is not altogether representative of, nor an adequate substitute for, experiencing first-hand.³⁶ Thus, while recognising the difficulty in moving beyond this perennial limitation, this article endeavours to read missionary accounts alongside an exploration of the wider contours of the evangelical movement in India, and, furthermore, considers the possibility of there having been multiple and co-existing layers of motivation involved with the missionary experience, some of which may not be immediately discernable in their writings.

The Creation of a 'Native Christian Community'

Everyone who has been in India knows that young trees in this country will not grow unless they receive water and care. With it very little seedlings quickly grow up into large trees.³⁷

It can be said that there was a great significance underlying the missionaries' decision to work with leprosy in India. The fact that missionaries opted willingly for the task of serving 'among the lepers', ready as Bailey said 'to spend and be spent' in the Indian field, necessitates further probing.³⁸ It is perhaps first important to recognise the degree of personal motivation that was involved in each missionary's decision to undertake work with leprosy-sufferers. An interesting example is that of Mary Reed, the American-born Methodist who was later appointed superintendent of the Chandag Asylum under the auspices of the ML.³⁹ Reed's is an interesting story in that she herself came to contract leprosy, a diagnosis which she took as a sure sign that she had been 'set apart by God' to minister among those with leprosy.⁴⁰

John Jackson's 1899 biography of Reed is also telling of the ML's broader considerations as a functioning charitable organisation. Painting Reed as a modern martyr who bore 'her heavy cross in a spirit of consecration' was arguably a strategic manoeuvre carried out to ensure continued financial sponsorship and support for the Mission's cause.⁴¹ The aggrandisement of Reed, it seems, was very much in the interests of Jackson, who, as an employee of the Mission, would have been most concerned with impressing the British donating public with such a fine example of the ML's good work.

For Bailey also it appears practical considerations weighed on his mind. *The Lepers of our Indian Empire: A Visit to Them in 1890-91*, written twenty-

five years after the founding of the ML, is particularly thorough in its attention to the details of progress that had purportedly been made. In the preface to the second edition Bailey reflects, 'We were then at work in 21 centres, we have now 52. We then had 7 Leper Asylums or Homes of our own, we now have 22.'⁴² There is a similar theme of reflection in other contemporary missionary tracts, such as Revered J. F. W. Youngson's chronicle of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), whereby the trials and triumphs of mission work in Punjab are endlessly enumerated, with a marked emphasis on the latter.⁴³

While it is important to understand how mission societies like the ML launched fundraising campaigns in order to kept afloat as self-supporting charities, it appears that at the heart of the broader British evangelical movement there was a profound objective to foster a more fruitful form of religious practice that could substantially and visibly help others on the path to salvation. As the former secretary of the ML, A. D. Miller wrote in his 1965 tribute to Bailey;

The Mission's task was to bring those who were without within, to take the sting out of the word 'leper' by the antidote of love, to be realist enough to recognise that any stigma attached to the disease could only be abolished by deed and not by word.⁴⁴

This not only exemplifies the evangelist's desire to act, but also, by mentioning the terms 'without' and 'within', Miller's statement demonstrates how mission work in India was a manifestation of the wider goal to expand God's kingdom on Earth. Eugene Stock, contemporary chronicler of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), explained that institution-building in the field was considered essential to the Christian cause because it was thought that such grass-roots construction work would in time 'make Christian nations.'⁴⁵ It follows, then, that missionaries driven by a desire to bring more people into the Christian fold, reported optimistically of their plans to increase the numbers of schools, hospitals and leprosy asylums within their districts. Reed, for one, seemed particularly passionate on this matter:

I pray and I hope that the two new buildings recently completed may be occupied by another fifty of the more than four hundred who are living within a radius of ten miles of us, and who ought to come and share the comforts and blessings so much appreciated by the patients here.⁴⁶

Furthermore, as Christopher Harding's exploration of the 'Christian village experiment' in rural Punjab suggests, the evangelical enterprise in India seemed to have been rather an idealistic affair.⁴⁷ As Harding explains, canal irrigation in the late nineteenth century opened up new land which provided an irresistible opportunity for those missionaries already active in

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the region to create entirely new village communities exactly as they pleased.⁴⁸ Lieutenant-Governor for Punjab, Sir William Mackworth-Young, speaking of one such model community in 1901 remarked:

Clarkabad is a single instance of what a Christian village can be, with its finance sound, its institutions of a church, school, and dispensary, all self-supporting; and its agriculture flourishing. In these respects it affords a valuable example for the Native Christian community, whose principal need is self-help and self-support.⁴⁹

As seen here, evangelist zeal for expanding the Kingdom of God on Earth fostered an idealism which came to characterise construction projects like Clarkabad. The leprosy asylum too had a place within this greater evangelical vision of a 'Native Christian Community'. As an isolated site far away from the corrupting influences of Indian society, and as a space which embodied the active and hands-on type of religious practice that was considered so essential to the evangelical enterprise, the leprosy asylum came to play a very important role within the broader proselytising campaign in India.

Leprosy Asylum as 'Corrective' Site

Here they receive not only the tender touch, but hear the loving voice, and the wordous message of a Saviour's love; and then it will be easy to understand how their hearts should be softened, how all suspicion will be removed, and how they will be constrained to yield themselves to the Saviour.⁵⁰

It comes as something of a surprise to find that medical work was not always well-respected in missionary circles.⁵¹ Sharing an aim of 'making whole', religion and medicine have long been combined as a means of evangelising.⁵² Indeed, a glance at the New Testament suggests that the marriage of physical healing with that of the soul would have been a rather obvious option for evangelical missionaries seeking to spread the light of the Gospel to other nations of the world.⁵³ For a long time, however, British Protestant mission work operated upon the principle that ordained men were the best candidates for the job, a sentiment encapsulated in the phrase, 'spiritual men for spiritual work'.⁵⁴ It was only from the mid-nineteenth century onwards that voices within the mission field began to articulate the need for a fuller picture of Christian civilisation in which medicine had a rightful place.⁵⁵

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the seedlings of a new outlook were beginning to show. Traditional missionary methods were proving ineffective in India and, more so than ever, missionary societies were willing to listen to those within the field and learn from their valuable first-hand experiences.⁵⁶ John Lowe, secretary of the Edinburgh Medical

Missionary Society (EMMS), was perhaps the most authoritative voice calling for a shake-up in strategy at this time.⁵⁷ By laying out parallels between Jesus - the Great Physician - and the modern-day missionary, Lowe sought to establish Medical work as a valid aid to evangelising.⁵⁸ To his mind, medical practice was not separate from the primary task of spreading the Gospel, but an intrinsic part of it.

It also became clear that medical work in the Indian field could not be avoided. Those untrained and unequipped to do so increasingly dispensed medicines *ad hoc*, earning themselves the label of 'pillbox missionary' or worse still, 'quack doctor'.⁵⁹ As Rev. F. Colyer-Sackett recalled:

Every missionary became a quack doctor! He could not help himself. You cannot say 'poor fellow' and pass on, when you know that a dose of salts or a grain or two of quinine a day might possibly bring back health.⁶⁰

Rosemary Fitzgerald has argued that the pulling-power of 'Clinical Christianity' and the lure of the missionary medicine chest were opportunely employed by missionaries for their own ends.⁶¹ Indeed, it was quickly realised that the dispensary could act as a 'pioneering agency',⁶² by providing a first point of contact with the Indian community; the temptation of Western medicine served to bring Indian people to the missionary and the intimate nature of the medical encounter itself created opportunities for developing relationships.

Certainly, the 'penetrating power of medicine' is a theme echoed in missionary writings.⁶³ Bailey commented that even the 'bigoted Mohammedans' became pleasant and friendly in sight of the medicine chest,⁶⁴ and Lowe gave the example of Kashmir where medicine had been used to break down the barrier of 'violent opposition' that had greeted previous missionaries.⁶⁵ Thus, just as 'women's work for women' was opening up the *zenanas* of Indian society at this time, the medical mission allowed the Christian doctor to enter into hitherto inaccessible spaces.⁶⁶

Medical work, however, was not simply concerned with 'opening new doors to the Gospel'; the offering of Western medicine also symbolised the more practical form of Christianity evangelical missionaries so craved.⁶⁷ Indeed, missionaries spoke of the importance of 'Practical Christianity', explaining the need for physical example over mere religious dogma.⁶⁸ As Lowe summarised, 'the Gospel must, therefore, be preached to them, alike by the living voice, and by the unmistakable evidence of loving deeds.'⁶⁹ Indeed, it was commonsense that such demonstrations of Christian good will would aid the missionary enterprise in India. Having learnt from experiences at their parishes in Britain, missionaries were quick to realise that physical example could be just as persuasive, if not more so, than verbal preaching in the field; simply caring could be a powerful expression of the Christian faith.

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To this tune, Dr. Ernest F. Neve of the CMS Kashmir station wrote:

A wound carefully dressed, an extra visit, patience under the provocation of disobedience or ingratitude, justice in the control of a large establishment, the maintenance of cleanliness and all that goes to make up discipline. The opportunities for demonstrating the difference between honest work and eye service - these things are more valuable than many a Sermon.⁷⁰

It follows, therefore, that the missionary doctor, being the very embodiment of evangelical action and as one who could bring 'relief to soul and body at the same time', was viewed in an increasingly positive light.⁷¹ As Arthur H. Neve, brother of Ernest and fellow CMS missionary, explained at the Medical Mission Auxiliary Annual Meeting (MMAAM) in May 1898, 'It is the doctor who wins the people's hearts. He goes to them and attracts by his skill, and wins by his sympathy, and convinces by his knowledge, and proves by his life.'⁷² The 'Double Cure', as it were, quickly became recognised as a pioneering tool for saving 'heathen' souls and the doctor by whom it was administered, the great evangelical agent of the day.

In the same way that the power of demonstration served to elevate the position of the doctor within missionary circles, 'Practical Christianity' also explains the missionaries' passion for building institutions. As Arthur Neve remarked, 'A hospital in its entirety, in its work, and in its start should be a very object lesson in Christianity.'⁷³ In this way, hospitals and the affiliated leprosy asylums as charitable institutions were, as a whole, expressions of the evangelical movement - brick and mortar proof that Christianity was 'no barren philosophy'.⁷⁴

Moreover, institutions like the hospital, the school and the leprosy asylum did not simply stand as symbols of Christian philanthropy, relying on the Indian bystander to draw an association between medical treatment and Christian philanthropy; they actively functioned within their walls as sites for evangelising. It is estimated that 'daily evangelism' - meaning the systematic and uniform preaching of 'the Word' - in the CMS leprosy asylum at Tarn Taran resulted in the conversion of a quarter of the asylum's inmates by 1891.⁷⁵ Evidence of the site being an 'evangelistic agency' is, moreover, found in contemporary missionary opinion.⁷⁶ In a letter to CMS headquarters, Ernest Neve spoke of the 'systematic exposition of the life of our Lord and of the leading Truths of Christianity [that] is carried on from day to day' in the ward services in Kashmir.⁷⁷ It appears that both Neve brothers recognised the great value of ward-preaching, or 'in-patient work' as Arthur Neve put it, in furthering the aims of the evangelical venture in India.⁷⁸

There are within these examples noticeable similarities with the corrective sites of nineteenth-century British society. From the 'daily and

systematic teaching in the Word of God' documented by Rev. E. Guilford down to the layout of asylum grounds in Bailey's two publications, there is the suggestion of a carefully planned programme of operation that is not at all dissimilar from that of Britain's disciplinary society.⁷⁹ Whilst not perhaps the 'total institution' Goffman has described, the leprosy-asylum documented by Bailey and his contemporaries bears a resemblance to the institutions found in late nineteenth-century Western society.⁸⁰ In particular, the idea of surveillance, which is a major theme in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, can be noted in missionary writing whereby the likes of the Neve brothers speak of hospitals and asylums as the best possible places for 'evangelising the people', arguably because of their potential for regulating in-patients.⁸¹

Moreover, like many of their contemporaries in Britain, it seems missionaries recognised that physical environments could have a truly reformatory purpose. Elaine Showalter and Andrew Scull, both prominent names in the history of British psychiatry, have made a substantial effort to explore Victorian notions of 'moral management',⁸² and, more specifically, have explained how the asylum site itself could serve a therapeutic purpose, thus aiding the patient's re-socialisation.⁸³ In the same way, then, that the York Retreat in Britain was born of the idea that a 'homelike therapeutic environment' could be conducive to mental and moral reform,⁸⁴ Bailey's use of the words 'Home' and 'Retreat' with reference to the leprosy asylums in India similarly convey a promise of sanctuary, rest and reform.⁸⁵ Bailey spoke quite explicitly of the idea that a quiet and restful environment would give leprosy-sufferers an 'opportunity for thinking about the truths which they hear'.⁸⁶ Therefore, although this visionary aspect within Bailey's writing could again be an indication of the missionaries' practical considerations - that missionary societies felt a certain amount of pressure to present a positive and uplifting picture of the ML's work in India - it could also be a reflection of the evangelical belief that 'a wholly Christian environment must inevitably produce Christian minds'.⁸⁷

The emphasis on environment is especially important considering the perceived level of corruption in Indian society. As Arthur Neve explained in his justification of isolation measures at the Kashmir Hospital, missionaries had 'to be a little watchful, lest any Muhamadan mullah should come and try secretly to counteract our teaching'.⁸⁸ The character of the unrelenting 'Muhamadans' thus necessitated strict segregation measures. Isolation, moreover, granted missionaries complete control over the social and cultural environment, allowing sites such as the leprosy asylum and the village of Clarkabad to become evangelical oases in a land of 'heathenism' and focal points for the under-construction 'Native Christian Community'.

The idea of correction also goes some way to explain the internal segregation practices that were adopted by missionaries. In particular, it was custom in missionary-managed leprosy asylums to separate the 'untainted' children from their infected parents.⁸⁹ While it may be suggested that such a policy was a practical means of 'staying the spread of the disease' modelled on the practices of the medieval leprosarium - as indeed was the case put forward by Bailey in his justification of the practice - it is equally plausible that this policy was aimed at furthering the greater Christian cause; accommodating healthy children separately was a systematic attempt to spiritually correct the future generations of the indigenous Christian community.⁹⁰ As evidence for this it is useful to look to how missionaries viewed those children they considered 'tainted'. Speaking of a group of leprosy children at the Monegar Choultry and Government Leper Hospital in Madras Bailey remarked, 'They smiled at us brightly, and seemed so glad to be taken notice of; yet doomed to something far worse than death.'⁹¹ It is therein suggested that the children's 'taint' was not merely reflective of their bodily affliction, but also of their spiritual darkness with which missionaries were primarily concerned. It can be argued that because it was the younger generations who would be left to carry the fate of the Christian Church in India, it was essential to enlighten them to Christian Truth as early as possible, while their minds were 'awake and keen, [and] ready to receive impressions...'⁹² Therefore, it was not only with physical edifices that missionaries implemented their vision of an indigenous Christian community in India, but also with the shaping of its future inhabitant population through Christian education and spiritual correction.

It seems the evangelical vision of a 'Native Christian Community' allocated a special place for the leprosy asylum. The medical treatment such a site offered not only provided a first point of contact with the Indian community but, also served as an olive branch in those more hostile territories like Kashmir. Moreover, as a physical edifice itself the leprosy asylum stood for, and actively functioned as, an aid to evangelism. Within its walls and without, modes were at work to 'cure' and 'enlighten' the future inhabitants of the indigenous Christian community. By isolating leprosy-sufferers and placing them within an evangelically-moulded social environment and by constructing physical sites which would serve as beacons of the Christian faith, missionaries were engineering their ideal of a 'Native Christian Community'.

Conclusion

We believe that Christianity will prevail, and that the day is coming, and perhaps very near, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted in

these lands above all other hills, and many people shall flow into it; for we see that Christ himself is now both 'searching His Sheep, and seeking them out,' and bringing them into His fold.⁹³

Though this analysis has offered just one side to the story of the missionary-leprosy encounter in late nineteenth-century India, it has been no straightforward exercise. Reaching any conclusion with regard to evangelism in a colonial context requires a degree of personal judgement. Maintaining balance and academic distance has thus been a problem throughout, especially when confronted with hard evidence that mission work in India was, in many cases, a numbers game: a fervent form of proselytising that often manifested in a calculated targeting of the sick. Moreover, the full effects of segregation practices across the globe are only now coming to light; as seen in the case of Abu Zabaal, Egypt's last leprosy-asylum, the stigma of segregation continues to affect the lives of sufferers even after the walls of the asylum have been allowed to come down.⁹⁴ Such developments have, in turn, cast a shadow on the legacy of missionary activity in the colonial world and have made missionaries themselves a subject of academic distaste.

On a more positive note, the destruction of the asylum site in more recent years and the refinement of life-transformative treatments such as Multi-Drug Therapy have enabled those once held captive by the disease to integrate back into society. Carrying with them the secrets of asylum-life, their side of the story can now be told. In academic terms, this has traced a new trajectory in the study of leprosy in India, whereby oral testimony is now being used to shed light on the experiences of those at the receiving end of missionary medicine. Kakar is leading the way in this regard, developing the 'patient perspective' and producing a more nuanced understanding of what was, lest it be forgotten, a two-sided episode in India's history.⁹⁵ 'Oral narrative', Kakar explains, 'is the only means for such patients, especially those without access to literacy, to enter into the arena and tell their own story.'⁹⁶ In particular, a 'special effort' is being made to restore the voice of the female sufferer, who has remained virtually silent in the narrative so far.⁹⁷

This new dynamic will perhaps reveal the deeper psychological trauma of segregation. The evangelical project in India, which at its heart sought to question the Indian worldview, arguably added a great deal of distress to the leprosy-sufferer who was already struggling with the physical disease itself. It would, moreover, be interesting to explore the effects of the internal segregation practices briefly discussed in this article. While leprosy-sufferers arguably had little choice but to give up their 'untainted' children in exchange for medical treatment, there was an element of resistance on their part that deserves proper attention. As Rev. E. Guilford noted in a letter dated 1895, some parents simply could not be persuaded to 'make over their

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offspring'.⁹⁸ Oral history can play a pioneering role in this respect, by uncovering the impact of such practices upon the family.

Although it would be erroneous to wholly dismiss the argument that medical work was never simply a humanitarian gesture on the part of the Christian missionaries and that their real aim extended beyond the alleviation of bodily symptoms, such an assessment is condemning to the point of completely obscuring the strength of the evangelist's conception of Divine Providence. As this article has shown, a profound sense of religious vocation underpinned the decision to work 'among the lepers'. British Protestant missionaries not only felt duty-bound to expand the Kingdom of God on Earth, but also destined to do so, speaking of their determination for a Christian world with an air of idealistic optimism and visionary force. It was the drive to engineer the ideal of a self-sustaining 'Native Christian Community' that lay at the heart of the 'separatist tradition' in India. Constructing corrective sites like the leprosy asylum was, in a sense, a small step towards the realisation of that even greater Christian goal: 'the evangelisation of the world'.⁹⁹

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Notes

- 1 Leviticus 13:45-46, Old Testament, *The Holy Bible*, King James Version (HarperCollins, 1998)
- 2 The phrase 'cannot be caught by a handshake' was taken from the Leprosy Mission International website, www.leprosymission.org/web/pages/leprosy/leprosy.html, accessed 6th January 2011.
- 3 For an overview of segregation on Robben Island and Molokai see, R. Edmond, *Leprosy and Empire: A Medical and Cultural History* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 143-177.
- 4 C. Strange & A. Bashford, 'Isolation and Exclusion in the Modern World: An Introductory Essay' in C. Strange & A. Bashford (eds.), *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion* (London, 2003), p 2.
- 5 M. Harrison, Empire Review Article on "Leprosy in Colonial South India", History in Focus website, August 2002, www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Empire/reviews/harrison.html, accessed 2nd July 2010.

- 6 J. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford, 2002), p. 7.
- 7 The missionary encounter with leprosy is mentioned briefly in J. Buckingham's *Leprosy in Colonial South India: Medicine and Confinement* (Basingstoke, 2001) and more extensively in S. Kakar's article, 'Leprosy in British India, 1860- 1940: Colonial Politics and Missionary Medicine', *Medical History*, Vol. 40 (1996), pp. 215-230. However, these are the only two recent works in the field. Kakar has commented on how leprosy, and its relationship with Western medicine, has been 'bypassed' as a subject of study. See, Kakar, 'Leprosy in India: The Intervention of Oral History', *Oral History*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (Spring, 1995), p. 38.
- 8 Z. Gussow & T. Tracy, 'Stigma and the Leprosy Phenomenon: the Social History of a Disease in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (1970), p. 446.
- 9 J. Staples, *Peculiar People, Amazing Lives: Leprosy, Social Exclusion and Community Making in South India* (New Delhi, 2007), p.18.
- 10 Z. Gussow, *Leprosy, Racism and Public Health: Social Policy in Chronic Disease Control* (Boulder, 1989), p. 21.
- 11 *Bacillus leprae* is the bacteria specific to leprosy. Its discovery confirmed what many European medical experts had been claiming for years, that infectious diseases were caused by living organisms and transmitted by human contact. For a summary of the 1898 Lepers Act see, Buckingham, *Leprosy in Colonial South India*, pp. 157-188.
- 12 W. C. Bailey, *A Glimpse at the Indian Mission-Field and Leper Asylums in 1886-87*(London, 1888) and W. C. Bailey, *The Lepers of our Indian Empire: A Visit to Them in 1890-91*(Edinburgh, 1899).
- The Mission to Lepers was founded by Bailey in 1874. It is still active today, operating under the name, The Leprosy Mission International. See, www.leprosymission.org/web/pages/abouttln/index.html.
- 13 Cox has discussed and challenged the ways in which missionary activity has been talked of as an appendage to British imperialism in India. See, Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 10.
- 14 T. Asad, 'Comments on Conversion' in Peter Van der Veer (ed.) *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (London, 1996), p. 271.
- 15 See, R. Fitzgerald, "'Clinical Christianity": The emergence of Medical Work as a Missionary Strategy in Colonial India, 1800-1914', in B. Pati & M. Harrison (eds.), *Health, Medicine and Empire* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 88-136.
- 16 Williams, C. Peter, 'Healing and Evangelism: The Place of Medicine in later Victorian Protestant Thinking' in W. J. Shields (ed.) *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 19, (Oxford, 1982), p. 278.
- 17 J. Hutchinson, *On Leprosy and Fish-Eating. A Statement of Facts and Explanations* (London, 1906), p. 1.
- 18 M. Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine, 1859-1914* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 2.

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- 19 For an indication of how leprosy-sufferers were viewed by the colonial state see the comments of H. H. Risley, 1901 Census Commissioner for India, cited in Buckingham, *Leprosy in Colonial South India*, p. 19.
- 20 Kakar has commented on this in, 'Leprosy in British India', p. 215.
- 21 E. Said, *Orientalism*, [1978] (London, 2003). Cox has spoken of a 'Saidian Master Narrative'. See, Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 9.
- 22 See, D. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley, 1993); D. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1981).
- 23 Staples, *Peculiar People*, p. 17.
- 24 Ibid., 19.
- 25 See, E. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Harmondsworth, 1961); E. Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Harmondsworth, 1963); M. Foucault, (trans.) A. Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1973)
- 26 Gussow & Tracy, 'Stigma', p. 446.
- 27 G. Lewis, 'A Lesson from Leviticus', *Man, New Series*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 1987), p. 596.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Staples has commented on how the term 'leprosy patient' not only completely overlooks the social ramifications of living with leprosy, but is also highly unrepresentative in that it assumes all sufferers are receiving some form of medical care. See Staples, *Peculiar People*, p. 5.
- 30 S. Kakar, 'Medical Development and Patient Unrest in the Leprosy Asylum, 1860-1940', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No. 4/6 (April-June, 1996), pp. 62-81.
- 31 Ibid., 78.
- 32 Buckingham, *Leprosy in Colonial South India*, pp. 1-4.
- 33 Ibid, 89.
- 34 C. Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia: The Meanings of Conversion in Colonial Punjab* (Oxford, 2008), p. 4.
- 35 See, L. Wittgenstein, 'II. Lectures on "Private Experience" and "Sense Data"' *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (July, 1968), pp. 275- 320.
- 36 Ibid., 275.
- 37 R. Clark, *The Punjab and Sindh Mission of the Church Missionary Society: Giving an Account of their Foundation and Progress for Thirty-Three Years, from 1852-1884* (Stand, 1885), p. 356.
- 38 Bailey, *Glimpse*, p. 47.

- 39 J. Jackson, *Mary Reed: Missionary to the Lepers* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1899).
- 40 Jackson, *Mary Reed*, p. 28.
- 41 Ibid., ix.
- 42 Bailey, *Lepers*, p. vi.
- 43 J. F. W. Youngson, *Forty Years of the Panjab Mission of the Church of Scotland, 1855-1895* (Edinburgh, 1896).
- 44 A. D. Miller, *An Inn Called Welcome: The Story of the Mission to Lepers 1874-1917* (London, 1965) p. 25.
- 45 Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, Vol. 1, p. xiv.
- 46 Cited in Jackson, *Mary Reed*, p. 34.
- 47 Harding, *Religious Transformation*, p. 209.
- 48 Ibid., 208.
- 49 Mackworth-Young quoted in *ibid.*, 228.
- 50 Bailey, *Glimpse*, p. 125.
- 51 Fitzgerald has argued that medicine was 'largely dismissed' by mission societies before the second half of the nineteenth century. See Fitzgerald, 'Clinical Christianity', pp. 94-95.
- 52 R. Porter, 'Religion and Medicine' in W. F. Bynum & R. Porter (eds.) *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 2 (London, 1993), p. 1449.
- 53 See, for instance, 'The Story of the Man Born Blind', John, 9:1-7.
- 54 Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, Vol. 1, p. xiii.
- 55 Rev. James Lewis spoke of 'an embodied Christianity' at the Liverpool Conference on Missions in 1860, cited in Williams, 'Healing and Evangelism', p. 276.
- 56 G. A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant missionary constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (London, 2006), p. 295.
- 57 The EMMS was established in 1841 to encourage the acceptance of the principle of medical missions. It was the first Western missionary society to confine its interest to the promotion of medical work.
- 58 J. Lowe, *Medical Missions: Their Place and Their Power* (London, 1886), p. 11.
- 59 A. F. Walls, 'The Heavy Artillery of the Missionary Army: The Domestic Importance of the Nineteenth-Century Medical Missionary' in Shields (ed.) *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 19, p. 297.
- 60 F. Colyer-Sackett, *Vision and Venture: A Record of Fifty Years in Hyderabad 1879-1929* (1930) cited in Fitzgerald, 'Clinical Christianity', p. 108.
- 61 Fitzgerald, 'Clinical Christianity', p. 108.

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- 62 Lowe, *Medical Missions*, p. 53.
- 63 Fitzgerald, 'Clinical Christianity', p. 111.
- 64 Bailey, *Lepers*, p. 33.
- 65 Lowe, *Medical Missions*, p. 102.
- 66 *Zenanas* are apartments reserved for secluded women. For more on the women's medical mission movement see, Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, pp. 235-240.
- 67 A. H. Neve quoted in *Mercy and Truth: A Record of C.M.S. Medical Mission Work*, Vol. 2, No. 18, (June, 1898) CMSA, p. 138. [Hereafter, MT]
- 68 A. H. Neve quoted in *Extracts from the Annual Letters of the Missionaries for the year 1893-1894*, CMSA, p. 385. [Hereafter, EAL]
- 69 Lowe, *Medical Missions*, p. 10.
- 70 EAL 1890-1891, p. 54.
- 71 Bailey, *Glimpse*, p. 65.
- 72 MT, Vol. 2, No. 18, p.136.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 E. F. Neve, EAL 1890-1891, p. 54.
- 75 Harding, *Religious Transformation*, p. 106.
- 76 EAL 1891-92, p. 232.
- 77 EAL 1890-1891, p. 54.
- 78 MT, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 60.
- 79 *Extracts* 1891-1892, p. 231. For an overview of the disciplinary society see Garland, *Punishment*, pp. 131- 146; P. Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (Harmondsworth, 1986), pp. 188- 224.
- 80 For the 'total institution' see, Goffman's *Asylums*.
- 81 MT, Vol. 2, No. 18, p. 138. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* was first published in 1975.
- 82 E. Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1980), p. 158.
- 83 A. Scull, 'A Convenient Place to Get Rid of Inconvenient People: The Victorian Lunatic Asylum' in Anthony D. King (ed.) *Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment* (London, 1980), p. 45; Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', pp. 157-181.
- 84 Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', p. 158. The York Retreat was established in 1796 by William Tuke and became a model for asylums around the world. See, Scull 'A Convenient Place'.
- 85 Bailey, *Glimpse*, p. 132.

- 86 Bailey, *Lepers*, p. 241. The York Retreat was established in 1796 by William Tuke. Pioneering methods of moral treatment, the Retreat soon becoming a model for asylums around the world.
- 87 E. F. Neve, *EAL 1890-1891*, p. 54.
- 88 Harding, *Religious Transformation*, p. 209.
- 89 *MT*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 60.
- 90 'Untainted Children' was a phrase used by missionaries. One such example can be found in a letter written by Rev. Guilford in 1895, titled 'Our People at the Leper Asylum'. See, *EAL 1894-1895*, p. 101.
- 91 Bailey, *Lepers*, p. 113.
- 92 Bailey, *Glimpse*, p. 23.
- 93 C. A. Newnham, *EAL 1899-1900*, p. 536.
- 94 R. Clark, *The Punjab and Sindh Mission of the Church Missionary Society: Giving an Account of their Foundation and Progress for Thirty-Three Years, from 1852-1884* (Stand, 1885), p. 363.
- 95 A recent article in *The Guardian* explained how the legacy of confinement is a limiting reality for past sufferers, with in-patients choosing to remain in the asylum. Jack Skenker, 'Egypt's last leprosy colony broaches time of integration', *The Guardian*, 10th October 2010, The Guardian Website, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/10/egypt-leper-colony-leprosy, accessed 22nd December 2010.
- 96 See, S. Kakar, 'Leprosy in India: The Intervention of Oral History'.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 98 *Ibid.*
- 99 *EAL 1894-1895*, p. 101.
- 100 A. H. Neve, *Modern Medical Missions* (London, 1899), p. 7.

Exploring Ideas Early Marathi Fiction by Women

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Fiction in its own way relates to reality. Paul Ricoeur has argued that while archival evidence would limit our understanding and reinterpretation of the past, fiction can provide many more ways to interpret a wider range of things.¹ This paper attempts to show ways in which the world was imagined and represented in creative literature by Marathi women from the late nineteenth century onwards and the skill with which they portrayed the social experience of women in general. The newly educated women discussed major gender issues of their time and often were critical of or had little faith in the social reform project of male reformers from Western India. The two novels I will focus on are Kashibai Kanitkar's *Palkhicha Gonda* (*A Silk Tassel in Palanquin* 1928) and Indirabai Sahasrabuddhe's *Keval Dhyeyasathi* (*Exclusively for a Higher Life* 1924). Both novels deal with different ideas about conjugal relations and empowerment of women which is significant considering they were articulated at a time when far stricter gender norms existed.

The idea of women writing was unacceptable to society at large. Even on the subject of women's education there was no agreement among reformers. Orthodox among Hindus often associated it with the possibilities for women in terms of communication with other men and neglect of domestic duties and preferred home education since women's place was ultimately, the home. Liberal reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade, R G Bhandarkar, and Atmaram Pandurang (fewer in numbers), taught their female relatives at home or encouraged them to attend classes such as the ones organized by the Study Group (1877) for women affiliated to the Prarthana Samaj. They favoured school education for women and their interaction with one another as well.²

However, women have been prolific writers since the late nineteenth century. Print negated the representation of women as silent, mute persons.³ Both 'traditionalists' and 'progressives' among female reformers put forward their arguments on gender reform, when these were being debated and legally introduced. The polemical writings of Pandita Ramabai⁴ and Tarabai Shinde⁵ in favour of social reform are well known in the context of the Marathi public sphere. Fiction however, offered possibilities of exploring gender role

reversals. Short stories in Marathi by women appeared around the 1880s and were published by periodicals such as *Manoranjani*, *Bhagini Samachar* and *Udyan*.⁷ Most women wrote in these periodicals using pen names and later their stories were published in a book form as a collection by the periodicals in which they wrote. The most popular themes dealt with were women's experience of child marriage, a young girl married to an old person, widowhood etc. Kusumvati Deshpande has argued that even ordinary women could write very bluntly and they began stressing marriage problems and wrote stories about love.

But the success of a novel depended on the numerically large male audience. The first novel by a woman, *Chandraprabhaviraha* (1873) by Salubai Tambwekar, was written off as 'a very foolish and absurd story... wretched both in manner and matter', by the critics.⁸ The novel was about a woman pining for her beloved from whom she had been separated, a theme which was not new to Marathi literature. This is the context in which novels by Kashibai Kanitkar and Indirabai Sahasrabudhe should be understood.

I

Kashibai Kanitkar was the first major writer in Marathi among women of her time. She was the wife of reformer G.V Kanitkar who was associated with the Prarthana Samajist circle in Pune and Bombay. Kashibai grew up in a Chitpavan Brahman family where she gradually learnt to accept that women are inferior to men though she did not understand why this was so. As a child, Kashibai had always shown an interest in learning and her father was in favour of her education, but the women relatives in the family were opposed to it on the grounds that it would make her boisterous. Kashibai tried learning on her own through teacher-pupil games with her brothers but could not keep up with it as she got married to Kanitkar at the age of nine. G.V Kanitkar was one of the many liberal reformers who were committed to women's education and conflicted with their families in attempting to educate their wives. However, these reformers could not rescue their wives from the aftermath of such clashes which came as punishment meted out mostly in their absence in the form of laborious household duties by older women of the family. Thus, these women led a precarious existence, wedged between the reformist husbands and orthodox family members.

What made Kashibai pursue her studies was partly her keen interest in it and partly to prove herself a worthy wife which enabled her to learn Marathi and Sanskrit, and read complex works in English which were held in high esteem by her husband, such as Mill's *Subjection of Women*.⁹ Her tremendous success at self education enabled her to achieve an intellectual companionship and intimacy with her husband which was customarily

unacceptable, as men and women were not to show mutual affection openly. This relationship enabled her to participate in literary and socio-political discussions and was to shape her own literary career. Hari Narayan Apte the renowned novelist was also an important influence in her life and on her writings as well. A close friend of the Kanitkars, Apte modeled his modern women characters on Kashibai, while she modeled her male characters on him. He urged her to model her work on Jane Austen's, who made the most of her limited education and experience by portraying middle class characters in an accurate way and in a sweet, simple style, something which he also noticed in Kashibai's writings.¹⁰

Kashibai was a prolific writer. Her first essay entitled 'Purvichi Striyan ani Halliche Striyan' (Women in Olden Times and Now) was written as a part of the Women's Study Group associated with the Prarthana Samaj and published in the newspaper of the organization, *Subodh Patrika* in 1882.¹¹ Her first book to be published was a biography of Anandibai Joshi, the first woman doctor in India. This book entitled *Anandibai Joshee Yanche Charitra* (1889) was significant since it was the first Marathi biography of a contemporary woman rather than a legendary woman of history, and the first ever authored by a woman writer in Marathi.¹² She authored many articles on women's issues in notable journals like *Vividhnyanvistar*,¹³ *Manoranjan* and *Navyug*. Her works of fiction include a collection of short stories called *Chandanyatil Gappa* (*Gossip in the Moonlight* 1898) and two novels, *Rangrao* (1903) and *Palkhicha Gonda* (*A Silk Tassel in the Palanquin* 1928). *Rangrao* (1903) was a romantic novel in which the main characters marry women of their choice, and spend time with them in exchange of ideas. This was exceptional, as it was something which never happened in a gender-segregated family in Western India.¹⁴

Kashibai's second novel *Palkhicha Gonda* (1928)¹⁵ is a story narrated by Manutai about her sister Rewati who was married to a mentally unsound raja. At the age of thirteen, Rewati is married into a wealthy family as it was always her mother's dream to get daughters married into rich families. But during the wedding festivities they find out that the groom is mentally unsound and that is why his mother, the queen regent of Sambhalpur, had decided to marry her son beneath their station as the state would pass into his hands only if he is married. Rewati's parents' dreams are shattered. They die of grief, of having given away their daughter in such haste. At the time of their death they advise Manutai and her brother to marry out of choice but seeing their sister's unhappy experience they both decide never to marry. They settle at their sister's state. The queen regent of the state, Rewati's mother-in-law, bequeaths the state to her (as her son was the head of the state only in name) giving important positions to her siblings as well. The brother

being eldest had the additional responsibility of ensuring that the education of his sisters is complete.

Together the three of them transform the state into an ideal egalitarian place where the women have equality of opportunity in every field. They have a right to their 'stridhan', their higher education is encouraged and good students, both male and female, are sent abroad for further studies on scholarships. They are free to marry out of choice. The Shibika College is an institution for deserted wives, women in troubled marriages and widows. To this Rewati decides to bring her childhood friends Dwarki, Vaari and Thaki who had not been happy in their marriages. Learned women do social work by teaching or the medical professions. If they prefer, they can commit their lives to the service of the country.¹⁶ She sympathises with the poor but does not go into details about plans for their betterment beyond the removal of beggars from the streets and free education for poor children.

The first part of the novel is detailed and deals briefly with the childhood of the protagonist Rewati and extensively with her marriage. Meera Kosambi suggests that Kashibai's knowledge of family life was drawn from her own and of those around her. Her knowledge of princely states could have come from newspapers and the marriage of one of her daughters into one. The second part is comparatively brief and the skill with which she has discussed inter-personal relationships in the first part does not come across here, which is about an ideal society. Since she was closely associated with women reformers like Ramabai Ranade and Pandita Ramabai, the idea of Shibika College could have been drawn from the Seva Sadan and Sharada Sadan, the respective institutions run by them.¹⁷

Rewati, the protagonist, utilizes her position to work for the welfare of women which make it possible for women to enter professions such as medicine, teaching and administration. Female characters in the novel do not like the idea of earning their livelihood, and conservatives, both men and women criticized her policies since 'now women will be taught to dance on the heads of their male relatives'. She therefore, tries different ways to persuade them. The most successful way to do this was through traditional women's ceremonies such as halad kunku (rituals to honour married women) and kirtans (religious discourses). Women reformers in the late nineteenth century actually did use these rituals. Without these familiar ceremonies, women hesitated to go out of the house and some of them did not get permission if it were otherwise. Thus, these ceremonies brought large numbers of women together and they discussed about the shastras and the fact that female education was allowed. Examples could be cited of educated women such as Gandhari and Maitreyi from the ancient texts, as Pandita Ramabai often did even in her lectures at the Arya Mahila Samaj.¹⁸ Ramabai

Ranade recalls that for a function at a Nasik girl's school in 1870s, education of girls was to be promoted and she went on a house to house basis to call women in the neighbourhood for the halad kunku ceremony. She managed to mobilise about fifty to sixty women for the function.

Women reformers had to be very cautious about their public image and adopted a persuasive approach towards orthodox women. Ramabai Ranade was a regular guest at both reformist and religious functions in Poona and Bombay and there was always a division among reformist and orthodox women. In Poona, a discourse on the Puranas was organized by the Prarthana Samaj in the 1880s. Pandita Ramabai was also present on the occasion. Orthodox women had planned to fill up the entire place in the temple so that the reformist women would have to sit with men where they would be conspicuous due to their small numbers and would feel self conscious, as even reformist women sometimes hesitated if they were seen with men other than their husbands in public. Therefore, a separate place was made inside the temple where at least the non-reformist women could sit. When Ramabai Ranade heard about the plan, her courage failed her, and she went and sat with the orthodox women. She had to bear with Ranade's wrath for not sitting with Pandita Ramabai and the men.¹⁹ She explained: 'I always tried to be on good terms with both orthodox and reformist women, so I had friends in both camps'.²⁰

Such tactics seemed to help in mobilizing support for women's organizations and institutions. For instance, when the Arya Mahila Samaj was founded by Pandita Ramabai in 1882, she was well aware that women would not turn up if she sent them invitations. Ramabai Ranade and Kashibai Kanitkar campaigned on a house to house basis for it. The reactions they got were embarrassing as many times women equated them with 'nautch' girls due to their close interaction with men.²¹ To ensure that more women would join in, Pandita Ramabai even made it compulsory for all male reformers attending the gathering to bring at least one of the women members of their family.²² The attitudes of women were difficult to alter. Women barely spoke to their husbands privately and to attend public gatherings along with them was quite shocking for most people. People collected on the streets to see the unusual spectacle of women wearing shoes and interacting with men freely.²³

Similarly, The success of the Seva Sadan in Poona (the largest of all female institutions founded in 1908 by the reformers GK Gokhale and GK Deodhar, for the purpose of training poor women as social workers who would be geared towards national service) was attributed to Ramabai Ranade's exemplary role as a wife and daughter-in law, and her use of the notions of 'duty' and 'motherhood'. An 'ideal motherhood' in her opinion,

could be extended to the general concept of 'love' for others and 'service' to society. It made possible the acceptance of medicine as a profession for women.²⁴ It also aimed at 'providing a varied scheme of Adult Women's Education and a professional training or vocational education for adult women taking into consideration the 'wants of grown up women'²⁵ Parvatibai Athavale, a widow associated with Hingne Stree Sanstha near Poona, continued the practice of shaving her head and following other observances that Hindu widows are supposed to according to custom, so that her work for widows would not be hampered. These institutions were successful in attracting women to the courses they offered and catered to the needs of adult women, both married and unmarried, as well as widows: something which started with Pandita Ramabai's Sharada Sadan and was gradually being acknowledged as beneficial to women. These experiments and the changes it brought about in women's lives are clearly reflected in Kashibai's novel.

In the novel, it is when the reins of the state pass into Rewati's hands that the power of the woman is celebrated. The ceremonies attached to coronation and holding of a darbar where Rewati presides in front of a largely male audience is one such instance where the author celebrates the lead taken by the woman.²⁶ Since the husband is mentally unsound he cannot perform any rituals or run his state. Rewati takes the lead, makes speeches in the durbar and has the state's seal also made in her name. She does not create a female dominated despotic state but one where she would depend on the decisions taken by others in the court. She names the state Palkicha Gonda (A Silk Tassel in Palanquin) as she explains that just as a tassel holds the palanquin in place, she has been holding her state together. Therefore, she is Palkicha Gonda as she symbolizes the tassel.²⁷ The story ends with the three siblings and the mentally unsound raja setting out on a long journey, leaving the State to be run by their agents.

This conclusion can be read in two ways. The reforms they had implemented in favour of women were not sufficient to do away with their misery, more concrete and bolder measures need to be taken. Or the author wants to suggest that the women have the capability to take over power from men and do a better job but even with their significant achievements they are unable to live happily, that they can be successful but not contented. The idea of women governing a state could have been borrowed by Mill's *Subjection of Women* (1869). Mill pointed out:

- If a Hindoo principality is strongly, vigilantly and economically governed; if order is preserved without oppression; if the cultivation is extending and the people prosperous, in three out of four cases that principality is under a woman. This fact to me is an entirely unexpected

one; I have collected from a long official knowledge of Hindoo governments. There are many such instances: for though by Hindoo institutions a woman cannot reign, she is the legal regent of a kingdom during the minority of the heir; and minorities are frequent, the lives of the male rulers being so often prematurely terminated through the effect of inactivity and sensual excesses. When we consider that these princesses have never been seen in public, have never conversed with any man not of their own family except from behind a curtain, that they do not read, and if they did, there is no book in their language which can give them the smallest instruction on political affairs; the example they afford of the natural capacity of women for governments is very striking.²⁸

This practically is a summary of the second part of Kashibai's novel. The way she has used the various experiments in women's lives in reality, gives weight to Mill's argument that women can govern better than men. It is remarkable how she could create a work of fiction around the prevalent ideas on women and their capabilities both in India and abroad. She imagined a perfect world where subordination of women has ended and they are able to govern the society in a just manner. The use of a utopian form indicates her faith and optimism in women's education as a way towards a perfect future.

Suzie Tharu and K. Lalitha have argued that her (Kashibai's) heroine appears as a tragic figure lost in the changing times. Rewati seems to be a big achiever but could not live happily having made that progress.²⁹ Having been educated women still found it difficult to break the bonds of patriarchy. Kosambi argues that Kashibai's feminist ideas seem to be a 'feminism of compromise' as she seems to suggest that the removal of women's oppression cannot be brought about without the help of men. She does not discuss family life or married life which is the site of oppression but locates the solution to women's problems outside the home that is, in education and employment. Rewati remains devoted to her husband in the true pativrata style. But as Kosambi explains that Kashibai could have kept her ideas only to the public sphere as she knew what ideas will be accepted and what was feasible.³⁰ She had to use a moderate language for her ideas to be accepted and for her novel to be a success.

According to Padma Anagol, this was a conscious policy of 'accommodation and assimilation' women leaders followed, with both orthodox women and the vernacular press that carried out anti woman propaganda, since they wanted to retain their newfound freedom.³¹ B.G. Tilak, a conservative leader, often reported favourably on the activities of Kashibai Kanitkar as compared to his venomous attitude towards Pandita Ramabai who was bolder. Anjali Soman has pointed out that women in the

late nineteenth century had realized that literature could be used to teach or say things. For any work to be widely read by women, such language and situations had to be used which women were used to. Kashibai Kanitkar therefore, used that kind of language and was a role model for women. She was educated, worked and wrote for the welfare of women. At the same time, she was devoted to her husband. By the turn of the century many stories by women were serialized in major literary journals such as *Manoranjan* and *Navyug*.³² There was a demand for women's writing in journals like *Vividhnyanvistar*. The editor wrote in 1899 that many readers had complained that the journal was meant for 'educated men and women', but there are no writings for women and by women. So, in order to set an example for women, Kashibai wrote one of her short stories, 'Shisvi Peti' (A Wooden Box) in 1899. This was the first story written by a woman for this journal, thirty two years after it was launched. Clearly, both men and women were interested in what women wrote about whether or not their ideas were taken seriously by anybody.³³

Palkhicha Gonda has not been given the recognition it deserves. On its first publication, a reviewer had characterized the novel only as 'easy to understand, attractive and thought provoking', and 'the account of the manner in which women are given rights of inheritance and employment, and equal authority etc is amusing'.³⁴ Yet, Kashibai's novel is optimistic and different from the kinds of novels written in Marathi at that time or earlier. In the context of the usual genres which were considered 'suitable' or 'acceptable', such as heroic tales, social tragedies, didactic and other novels of the time, a utopian idea from a woman, appears unique. Her writings are definitely bolder than those of her more celebrated close friend Hari Narayan Apte. In his most famous novel *Pan Lakshyat Kon Ghetla* (*But Who Cares?* 1890), Apte delves into family life but the future of the female protagonist with modern ideas appeared bleak. Writing had thus given women the opportunity to recast themselves as modern women, preparing themselves for the rapid changes brought by the colonial world.

II

Indirabai Sahasrabuddhe's (1890-?) literary career coincided with that of Kashibai's but I began by analyzing the latter's work first since Kashibai being a renowned reformer was a part of the milieu where women's writing was still somewhat restricted. That she faced less opposition was because of the support from men and women reformers who saw her as the 'ideal woman'. Sahasrabuddhe's writings are bolder but little is known about the author to allow us to locate her in her setting. Her bold writings have led Suzie Tharu and K. Lalitha to conclude that she started the 'feminist tradition' in novel writing.³⁵ Her articles appeared in major literary magazines such as

Manoranjan, *Navyug* and *Udayan*. Her novels *Godavari* (1910) and *Keval Dhyeyasathi* (*Exclusively for a Higher Life*, 1924) deal with different ideas regarding the institution of marriage. *Godavari* is a novel that brings up the cruelty of child marriages and shows how a girl at a tender age is expected to adjust to an entirely new and often an unfriendly environment. The story makes a case for a marriage of choice as opposed to a traditional arranged marriage.³⁶

In this section I would focus on *Keval Dhyeyasathi* (1928).³⁷ This is a story of a strong headed and independent woman called Shalini. Her father is a Prarthana Samajist and has always given Shalini the freedom to make her decisions, receive education up to the level she desires and pursue the profession of her choice. Shalini believes in absolute independence of women, including the freedom to express oneself, freedom to pursue any kind of employment to avoid being economically dependent on anyone, freedom of public mobility, without a male companion.

According to her, women are as capable as men and can pursue any vocation that men can. They should have their own income to support themselves. At the age of 22, Shalini lives alone and travels wherever she likes without any male companions. Through acquaintances she meets Kamlakar who holds similar views. But when Kamlakar suggests marriage she refuses and explains that the institution of marriage is designed to keep the status of women low forever. Every ritual concerning marriage symbolizes the suppression of female individuality and therefore, she would only settle for a relationship outside marriage where she can have her own space. They start their lives together without marriage despite hesitation from Kamlakar's side, and have a child. Kamlakar dies before the child is born and Shalini is left to fend for herself and the child without any help. Both Shalini's and Kamlakar's fathers are well educated men. They refuse to take responsibility for Shalini and her child. Shalini is not in the least resentful of the way her life has turned out as she strongly believes in women's independence and hopes to create an organization of women in future where other women can also do what she has done. She cites the example of the British writer, George Eliot who lived with George Lewes without being married.³⁸ George Eliot had been a rebel in her life. To live with a man outside marriage while he was married to another woman, was a radical challenge to British society in the nineteenth century. They were not ready to accept a peripheral, temporary or secret status for a love which was not ratified by law.³⁹ Shalini explains that George Eliot did not seem to think that the institution of marriage was oppressive but she herself could not marry Lewes because his wife was alive. But Shalini insists that she will stick to her decision to not marry.⁴⁰

Male characters in the novel are shown to be ideologically less

committed. They hold progressive ideas but cannot put them to practice. Kamlakar is someone who believes in education and freedom of women. In their first meeting he took Shalini to be a shy girl who would not converse with a stranger. When his aunt (at whose house they meet) goes into the kitchen to prepare tea, he expected that Shalini would follow her. But she does not, and instead initiates conversation. Kamlakar is shown to be the shy one who cannot get used to the fact that a woman can talk so freely.⁴¹ While talking of marriage, he hesitates considerably at the idea of a relationship outside it.⁴² Marriage to him is an institution which binds two people and is socially acceptable. Going against marriage amounted to going against society, of which he kept warning Shalini. Even her father, a prominent reformer associated with Prarthana Samaj tries his best to dissuade his daughter from taking the step and when she does not, he breaks all ties with her. Twenty years later when Shalini accidentally meets him, she expects that her father would have forgiven her but he does not. He tries to make her repent of her actions, only then would he accept her, but she does not do so. She observes that her father used to be very liberal, 'but lately he has changed his ideas. And he now believes that the point of progress that has been made in society is sufficient and other people should also not go beyond'.⁴³ Similarly, her father-in law who is a renowned doctor never accepts her in the life time of his son and even after his death. For a decision that both Shalini and Kamlakar had made together, he blames her. She is characterized as a prostitute who ruined his son's life. This points to wide gaps in the ideas and practice of most of the reformers of the time.

A good example would be M.G Ranade, the renowned reformer based in Poona and judge at the High Court in Bombay. Ranade was on the forefront of all reformist activity in the latter half of nineteenth century. He had been very vocal about the need for education of women and was also associated with the Widow Remarriage Bureau (Society for the Promotion of Widow Remarriage, 1865) started by Vishnu Sastri Pandit, another reformer based in Poona who had married a widow himself. Along with him, Ranade had assisted in marriages that took place as part of the working of this Bureau whose campaign was extended beyond Brahman caste to those communities which have not been allowing widow remarriage according to recent custom and as part of their effort to emulate Brahman practices to raise themselves in social standing. Such castes included the Kapole Baniya caste as well. Madhavdas Rugnathdas, a merchant belonging to this caste was assisted by Ranade, Bhandarkar, Pandit and others in his marriage to a widow named Dhankorebai of the same caste in Bombay in 1871. These reformers strongly supported Rugnathdas when wealthy and influential people of his caste, especially his own father in law Verjivandas, ostracized him from the

community and attacked his business with the help of others from the community. Such was the position of Ranade in society that whenever he was appealed to, he would rise to the occasion and provide support along with reformers from Prarthana Samaj, as one who would not waver from his stance. But he shocked his fellow Prarthana Samajists as well as other supporters and well wishers outside it by marrying an eleven year old Ramabai after the death of his first wife, instead of a widow as was expected of him since he was one of the members of the Widow Remarriage Bureau.⁴⁴ There maybe many other such reformers who went back from their word, Ranade was only one of them, but being an important figure in the society at the time his faults are highlighted though not always unnecessarily.

In the novel, Shalini raises her daughter Kamlini all by herself by writing for magazines and by sewing for a living. She expects her daughter to carry forward her ideas. But tragedy occurs when the daughter having grown up in poverty develops a liking for comfort and money. She faces problems at the time of marriage, as the boy's family finds out about her mother being unmarried. Seething with rage, Kamlini having discovered her rich relatives, decides to leave her mother. Shalini ultimately commits suicide as it was unbearable to see her daughter turn out this way but not before mentioning in her suicide note that she does not regret the path she had chosen.

Sahasrabuddhe points out the continued dependence of women on men. She argues that education of women has not made them fully autonomous. Women do not even have a say in what kind of education they must receive. In the novel, Shalini leaves her graduation unfinished as her college authorities were retracing from their earlier idea of same education for men and women. As even Anandibai Joshi had said about training in midwifery: 'Midwifery classes are opened in all the Presidencies but the education imparted is defective and not sufficient, as the instructors are conservative, and to some extent jealous. I do not find fault with them that is the character of the male sex.'⁴⁵

However, when Kamalakar suggests that women should be allowed the right to vote, Shalini argues that she is more concerned with social and moral issues rather than with political issues. According to her, women have been fighting for their rights for a long time and she is part of many such organizations even though she does not mention any. But she feels that it is more important to deal with social and religious issues because of which women have been suppressed so far, and then move on to political issues. She argues that women have neither been reformed that much and nor is their education designed to do so. There are very few women who can be selected to the Legislative Council.⁴⁶

Education helped women to contribute to reformist activities through

organizations meant for them such as Arya Mahila Samaj. The new female intelligentsia that was gradually formed was educated, committed to reform and largely worked in agreement with their male counterparts. Many of the organizations were auxiliaries of the reformist organizations which Gail Pearson refers to as 'the extended female space', home being the core and girls's schools and organizations being extensions.⁴⁷ This enabled men to leave the leadership of women in the hands of this new intelligentsia as they were to work in agreement with reform movement and could penetrate the interiors of the household where men hardly had any reach since women rarely spoke to men of their own house. The new intelligentsia not only passed on the views of reformers but began to impart their world view to women. But, though men allowed them to fit into roles outside the home, they expected old values to be retained at home. They wanted educated companions and that women should be in charge of social reform so that they could pursue politics.⁴⁸ As Gail Pearson puts it, while women's segregation was lessening due to their increased participation in the male world, there was still no threat to male dominance.⁴⁹ To go against family and other social institutions was still not possible for women. In the novel, Sahasrabuddhe clearly argues that there are so many obstacles put in women's paths by religion and by society that women would hardly be able to use any of the rights to their benefit. She saw little sense in the idea of women being free outside the home and yet, subordinated inside it. So, marriage was the first institution which according to her needs to be reformed.

The idea of love as the basis of marriage was hardly being talked about. Male and female reformers, came from backgrounds where women in their families had been subjected to domestic violence, verbal abuse and other kinds of harassment, and were not in a position to speak of such things. At best what they talked about was companionate marriages and marriage as a necessity for women. Parvatibai Athavale explains what marriage entails for women. She argues that no life is complete without marriage.

The sense of duty and self renunciation must be the foundation of marriage'. People just want to copy European fashions in family life, nuclear families for instance. 'But Western ladies not only make their home attractive to male members but also participate in social activities. Women in India married or unmarried should also do so. So that home is where comfort is for men. The advantage of female education should show itself in the reformation of the home, if it is to be of any advantage to our country... In India there is no love and attraction between partners as in West. Between child marriage and Western marriage there is a middle path which is better for us.

As regards education, she says that for women there is a greater servitude in employment than there is in married life.

There is no reason why women should not choose the servitude of love to that of money. The idea of obtaining material gain is a very much lower ideal than that of becoming a good mother and a good mistress of the home...if freedom from servitude means freedom from men and a life of independence from them, then that freedom is unnatural, impossible, disastrous and opposed to the laws of right living. In order to escape the servitude to their husbands, women must not accept the servitude of outside employment. And female education should be in accordance with this ideal.⁵⁰

Love for women meant devotion to their husbands and it was a desired ideal. Reformer GK Gokhale wrote in the foreword to Ramabai Ranade's *Reminiscences*: 'A deep love between husband and wife is often found in Western society. That is a relationship of equality. But, even when there is a similar deep love, that the wife should devote herself wholly to the service of the husband and consider this as the fulfillment of her life, is a special characteristic of the women of the East and particularly of India...this fundamental characteristic remains unaffected in women like Vahinibai (sister-in-law), although the pattern of their life may be modified by new education, new ideas and new environment.'⁵¹ Ramabai herself said that a wife's sacred duty was to see that her husband had to suffer nothing, on her account or any other account. That should be her life long aim and she should strive for it.⁵² So great was her devotion that she wanted to do exactly what Ranade pleased, since he was her only happiness. She went openly to the meetings of Arya Mahila Samaj on Saturdays, her devotion led her to do things which she would not have had courage to do on her own. She began giving speeches first in Marathi then in English, all at the cost of her peace of mind at home. Women of the house did not like this intimacy between Ranade and Ramabai. As a punishment they gave her more laborious work to do and kept her busy. But Ramabai took all that in her stride as two soothing words from her husband were enough for her to forget a hard day.⁵³

Yet, when she asked him not to neglect his health because of the hard work he used to do, she often had to bear with taunts such as these 'you women are God's own darlings. He has given you a constitution, different and superior to ours, he has created us to bear the whole burden of work and strain and he created you women folk to sit in the shelter of the home, relax and enjoy life. We cannot digest even the little measured food we eat without toil and exercise...Just look at you all! Whatever and however much you eat, you need no exercise to digest it. You don't have to read, write or do even any house work... and in spite of all this god has given you one right that is you

must argue with men.⁵⁴ Ranade did not take into account the domestic duties that Ramabai had to take care of, being one of the younger women in the family. Also, the arguments and altercations she bore with at her expense for his sake. Just because she did not share with him the hardships borne each day, he assumed that things were easier for women. He also ignored the fact that each night Ramabai used to massage his feet with ghee without which he could not sleep, and used to get up early in the morning, not always after sufficient sleep, to study. This implies that by educating his wife, Ranade found a companion in her with whom he could discuss and explain the issues of the day, but he was hardly a companion for her, as he never lent an ear to her personal problems. This is a kind of oppression women either did not feel, or were not allowed to complain of. This is the kind of marital relationship Shalini, the protagonist in the novel does not want to have. She fears that with marriage, love takes the place of devotion and women lose their individuality and are saddled with all these duties which men are not supposed to bother about traditionally.

There were also those devoted women who faced violence in marriage. Anandibai Joshi, the first woman doctor of India, who had been educated by her husband Gopalrao Joshi, alludes to the violence during their married life. She writes in a private letter to him from America in 1884: 'it is not at all my intention to distress your dear heart or to cause a rift in our love by raking up old memories... In our society, for centuries there has been no legal restraint between husband and wife, and if it exists, it works against women! Such being the case, I had no recourse but to allow you to hit me with chairs and bear it with equanimity. A Hindu wife has no right to utter a word or to advise her husband. On the contrary, she has a right to allow her husband to do what he wishes, and to keep quiet. Every Hindu husband can, with advantage, learn patience from his wife. (I do understand that without you I would never have become what I am now, and I am eternally grateful to you; but you cannot deny that I was always calm'.)⁵⁵ Suma Chitnis has argued that Gopalrao strongly believed in education of women and encouraged Anandibai to study. But encouragement could be oppressive. He drove Anandi to a goal he set for her; she was caught in a new kind of bondage.⁵⁶ She continued to be a vegetarian in America, wore her cotton nine yard sari instead of warmer clothes to protect her from a cold climate. In an effort to live within the frame set by her husband, she tremendously compromised her health even as she pursued her studies.

Love was therefore not the basis of marriage. In Sahasrabuddhe's novel Shalini suggests that marriage is something which tends to tie two people to one another. This should not be so. Love may not last long as people change after marriage and in such a case or any other, marriage should not be

binding. The famous Rakhmabai vs. Dadaji Bhikaji case of the 1880s is an example where Rakhmabai an educated woman from a reformist background sought to break matrimonial ties with her husband Dadaji, who was not worthy of her. She was married to him in her childhood but had never lived in his house as she argued that Dadaji had no house of his own or a livelihood to support himself. He had not completed his education and did not keep well; moreover the atmosphere in his house was not what Rakhmabai was used to. For a woman to give reasons such as these in a court of law was remarkable. She was able to point out ways in which her marriage was unequal. But if a woman dared to hint that she was too good for her husband, society chastised her. Therefore the judgment in 1887 was in favour of Dadaji (who represented the orthodox section as both orthodox and reformist sections closely observed and debated the issue in newspapers at the time) to whom Rakhmabai was to return or face imprisonment. The institutions of the state and the processes of the British legal system thus conjoined with prevailing indigenous norms of social behaviour and codes of conduct to legitimate the subordination of women in marriage arrangements.⁵⁷ Though it was not difficult for a Hindu man to get another wife but it was an insult to a man whose wife did not want to live with him.

Rakhmabai was able to show what freedom can do for women and also that how difficult the society makes it for women to even dream of it. She argued 'after marriage a girl's physical and mental freedom ends. She has to labour hard. I won't use the term servant because even they are in a position to quit their jobs.'⁵⁸ In a letter she wrote to a friend in 1887 she said that 'I like to study but absolutely hate marriage ... as I went on studying I was inclined towards social reform and felt the need to do something for women.'⁵⁹ Her mind was gradually becoming prejudiced about the institution of marriage and due to her own bad experience she feared for others.⁶⁰ Rakhmabai and Pandita Ramabai were rare examples of women who publicly made dent in the patriarchal set up. By remaining unmarried the rest of their lives, and committing themselves to work of women's emancipation and reform they demonstrated that women's education can truly bring about their self reliance. But it was also their unconventional background which gave them the confidence and the support system to carry forward with their ideas. Most women did not have that advantage.

Indira Sahasrabuddhe thus, argued that women's lives stopped short of ideas of personal fulfillment and individualism. All the rhetoric regarding education and emancipation was not meant for her fulfilment, it was not to make her skilled for her own emancipation but for the benefit of the country.⁶¹ They were to nurture the household for the same purpose. To support the idea of love as the basis of marriage or marriage as a choice not

compulsion, education for employment, all this appeared to be false. One can read her novel as a tragedy where the protagonist is shown as helpless. Even George Eliot, it was said only lived the revolution but did not write of it. She does not offer a model for aspirant women but simply represented their curtailment.⁶² But Sahasrabuddhe provides a model for aspirant women even as she talks about dependence of women on men in almost every field. She offers a solution outside marriage and identifies the domestic sphere as the starting point of all oppression. Though women, even the reformist women, did not think of it as a solution. It is difficult to ascertain how the novel by Sahasrabuddhe was received by contemporaries, as hers was one of the many novels by unknown women appearing in the various journals mentioned earlier. But one can say that Sahasrabuddhe's novel stands out at a time when men writers did not depict marriage as oppressive. Narayan Sitaram Phadke (1894-1978) and Vishnu Sakharan Khandekar (1898-1976) were the most popular writers in the 1920s. Phadke wrote stories about young love of urban middle class background. Kusumvati Deshpande has argued that to him, it was the duty of fiction to provide an escape from hard realities of life. Khandekar wrote with a similar view and discussed Gandhian programme and socialism in his novels.⁶³

Both Kashibai and Indirabai Sahasrabuddhe imagined a society where women have direct and greater control in its functioning, a society which is better especially for women. The continued dependence on men was something which women were taking advantage of to strengthen their own ground for future. In terms of their writings, they carefully take note of women's problems and try and point out areas which weaken their potential. While Kashibai does so in an indirect way, Sahasrabuddhe does so in a subversive way. If Meera Kosambi suggests that freedom from marriage was a hidden statement in Kashibai's novel, Indira Sahasrabuddhe clearly says so in her novel. They both dealt with ideas and possibilities for women their different situations allowed them to discuss, and that is how their writings must also be appreciated. Also, their awareness of writings and lives of British women helped them to understand the generalized oppression of women. It led them to compare their own lives with British women and to see how far and in what manner they can articulate a critique of patriarchy from their point in history.

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Notes

- 1 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, volume I, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1984.
- 2 DG Vaidya, *Prarthana Samajacha Itihaas*, Bombay, Prarthana Samaj, 1927, p. 160-1.
- 3 Tanika Sarkar, *Words to Win: The Making of Amar Jiban*, Kali for Women, Delhi, 1999, p. 119.
- 4 She wrote the guidelines for women on correct behaviour which were similar to the reformist notion of the 'new woman'. These she published in *Stri Dharmaniti* (1882), in order to raise money for her voyage to England. She went on to critique patriarchal society in her more famous polemical writing, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (1887). The solution to these problems in the Pandita's opinion was education of women; self reliance and the need for Indian women teachers to go behind the zenana as only Indian women teachers could hope to reach them since interaction with men was not possible, and foreign women teachers raised the fear of Christian proselytisation. Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, Bombay, Maharashtra State Board of Literature and Culture Mantralaya, 1981.
- 5 Tarabai Shinde, in her polemical tract *Stri Purusha Tulana* held men responsible for problems such as prostitution, widowhood, infanticide, absence of women from politics, and their lack of rights. Tarabai Shinde, *Stri-Purusha Tulana*, Poona, 1882, tr. by Rosalind O'Hanlon, *A Comparison Between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India*, Madras, Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 59; see also, Vidyut Bhagwat's article in Feldhaus Anne ed., *Images Of Women In Maharashtrian Society*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 213.
- 6 Edited by Kashinath Raghunath Mitra. It was widely understood to be a progressive periodical. Article by Dr. Vasant D. Rao in S.P. Sen (ed), *The Indian Press*, Calcutta, Institute of Historical studies, 1967, p. 72.
- 7 Between 1880-1920, *Manoranjan* published 19 stories, *Bhagini Samachar*, 18; *Udyan*, 13; other periodicals were *Madhukar*, *Prachiprabha*, *Chitramayajagat*, *Lokmitra*, *Vividhnyanvistar*, *Navyug*, *Prabhat*, *Chittavinodmala*, *Mahratta*, *Mahratta Mitra* and *Bhandari Mitra*. See article by Anjali Soman in *Stri Sahityacha Magova*, eds Manda Khandge, Leela Dixit, Aruna Dhere and Vinaya Khadpekar, Pune, Sahitya Bhagini Mandal, 2002, p.83.
- 8 Padma Anagol, *Emergence of Feminism in India 1850-1920*, England, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 79-80.
- 9 Kashibai recalls that whenever she was unable to read either Sanskrit or English properly, he would taunt her by saying, "Can stones ever learn?". This would present itself as a challenge and provided her with the drive to prove herself to her husband. Also, in her husband's reformist circle she was conscious of not being able to pronounce words in Marathi properly. Kashibai Kanitkar, *Atmcharitra ani Charitra*, ed by Sarojini Vaidya, Mumbai, Popular Prakashan, 1980, pp. 79-80.

- 10 Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007, p. 172-80.
- 11 Ibid p. 70.
- 12 Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007, p. 76.
- 13 The *Vividhdyanvistar* was the most respected of the Marathi journals and had its first issue published in July 1867. S.P. Sen ed. *The Indian Press*, Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1967, pp. 70-1.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Kashibai Kanitkar, *Palkhicha Gonda*, Pune, Ganesh Mahadev and Co., 1928.
- 16 Ibid pp.174- 229.
- 17 Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007, pp. 186-8.
- 18 It was the first organization with a clear cut ideology and structure. Its two main objectives were: 1) to achieve emancipation of women and, 2) to free the women of India from the oppression of blind customary practices. D.G. Vaidya, *Prarthana Samajacha Itihaas*, Bombay, Prarthana Samaj, 1927, p. 166.
- 19 Ramabai Ranade, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences* (1915), tr. by Kusumvati Deshpande, Publication division, Government of India, Delhi, 1963, p. 105.
- 20 Ibid p.108.
- 21 Kashibai Kanitkar, *Atmasharitra ani Charitra*, ed. by Sarojini Vaidya, Mumbai, Popular Prakashan, 1980.
- 22 Ibid p.162.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Padma Anagol, p. 69.
- 25 Padma Anagol, p. 68.
- 26 Kashibai Kanitkar, *Palkhicha Gonda (A Silk Tassel in Palanquin)*, Pune, Ganesh Mahadev and Co., 1928, pp. 197-200.
- 27 Ibid. p.118.
- 28 J.S Mill, *Subjection of Women* (1869), Great Britain, Anchor Press, 1983, p. 100.
- 29 Suzie Tharu and K. Lalitha eds. *Women Writing in India I*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 256.
- 30 Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007, pp. 172- 99.
- 31 Padma Anagol, *Emergence of Feminism in India 1850-1920*, England, Ashgate, 2005, p. 77.
- 32 Ibid

- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Review in *Kesari*, 4th September, 1928; cited from Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007 pp. 172-99.
- 35 Suzie Tharu and K. Lalitha ed., *Women Writing in India I*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 385-90.
- 36 Indira Sahasrabuddhe, *Godavari* (1910), Mumbai, Ganesh Vithal Kukarni, 1917.
- 37 Sahasrabuddhe, *Keval Dhyeyasathi*, Mumbai, Ganesh Vithal Kulkarni, 1924.
- 38 Sahasrabuddhe, *Keval Dhyeyasathi*, Mumbai, Ganesh Vithal Kukarni, 1924, p. 58.
- 39 Gillian Beer, *George Eliot*, Key Women Writers Series, Great Britain, The Harvester Press, 1986, p.7-9.
- 40 Sahasrabuddhe, *Keval Dhyeyasathi*, Mumbai, Ganesh Vithal Kukarni, 1924, p. 58.
- 41 Ibid. p. 6.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid. p.16.
- 44 Ramabai Ranade, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences*, tr. by Kusumvati Deshpande, Publication division, Government of India, Delhi, 1963. pp 32-40
- 45 Cited from Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007, pp. 70-87.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Gail Pearson, 'The Female Intelligentsia in Segregated Society- Bombay, A Case Study.', in Allen Michael and SN Mukherjee eds., *Women in India and Nepal*, Australia, Australian National University, 1982, pp. 136-7.
- 48 Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, NCHI Vol. 4.2, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 73-83.
- 49 Gail Pearson, 'The Female Intelligentsia in Segregated Society- Bombay, A Case Study.', in Allen Michael and S.N. Mukherjee eds., *Women in India and Nepal*, Australia, Australian National University, 1982, pp. 151.
- 50 Parvatibai Athavale, *My Story: an Autobiography of a Hindu Widow* (1930), translated by Rev. Justine E. Abbot, New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House, 1996 edition. pp 136-148.
- 51 Foreword, Ranade Ramabai, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences*, tr. by Kusumvati Deshpande, Publication division, Government of India, Delhi, 1963.
- 52 Ibid. p. 196.
- 53 Ibid. pp.74-84.

- 54 Ramabai Ranade, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences*, tr. by Kusumvati Deshpande, Publication division, Government of India, Delhi, 1963, p. 169.
- 55 Anandibai Joshi's letter cited in Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2007. p. 70-87.
- 56 Foreword by Suma Chitnis in S.J. Joshi, *Anandi Gopal* (1962), tr. and abridged by Asha Damle, Calcutta. Stree, 1992. p viii.
- 57 Article by Jim Masselos in Anne Feldhaus ed., *Images of Women in Maharashtrian Society*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 192-211.
- 58 Mohini Varde, *Dr Rakhmabai: Ek Artha*, Mumbai, Popular Prakashan, 1990, pp. 1-100.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Suzie Tharu and K. Lalitha eds., *Women Writing in India I*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 385.
- 62 Kate Millet's argument in Beer Gillian, *George Eliot*, Key Women Writers Series, Great Britain, The Harvester Press, 1986, p. 3.
- 63 Kusumvati Deshpande and MV Rajadhyaksha eds., *History of Marathi Literature*, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1988, pp. 155-7.

Book Reviews

Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night*, Random House India, 2009, pp. 239; Rs. 295.

Basharat Peer was a teenager when the separatist movement began to grab headlines in 1989. As young men began to cross over the line of control for several reasons, Peer was sent off to Aligarh so that he might be kept out of Kashmir politics, and he continued to visit home for the vacations. After college he became a journalist in Delhi, until he returned to the smouldering Valley to seek out the stories that had haunted his consciousness through the years he was safe in other parts of the country. Describing the turbulent history of his homeland as an insider, Peer challenges many of our beliefs on what is happening in Kashmir, and how we would like to settle the issue of separatism at our sensitive borders with Pakistan and China.

In 2010 the Government of India set up a three member team of Interlocutors, after a bloody summer of stone pelting and protest in which scores of youth were killed in the crossfire between separatists and security personnel, so that normalcy could return to the lives of a people battered by decades of unrest. Their brief was to seek a path to a political settlement of the 'Kashmir Problem' that had defied solution in spite of all the pressures brought on all sides in the dispute. The primary task of the team was to build confidence through showing leniency and letting go of the methods used frequently of arresting people on flimsy or trumped up charges, holding them without trial but stopping short of ending the rule of the Disturbed Areas Act and the AFPSA. The intrusive presence of the security forces was also to be reduced. Apart from political issues, infrastructure, education and employment were also on the agenda. Perhaps most important of all was the issue of governance. Could we come to an understanding of the alienation and cynicism with which the people of Kashmir looked at the betrayals of New Delhi since Independence?

Peer starts his story with an idealised picture of daily life in a mountain village in Anantnag, as his memories of halcyon days living in a joint family with several generations and his brother Wajahat for company, recall a Kashmir at peace with itself. The only outsiders were the tourists, both domestic and international. His internal world was made up of American comics, Bollywood movies and film songs. He aspired to join the Indian Civil Service, like his father a member of the Kashmir Civil Service. When he was 12, Yasin Malik, then 21 years old, organised the kidnapping of the daughter of the Union

Home Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, a Kashmiri Politician. Like all Kashmiri youth, Peer did not identify with the symbols of nationalism: the Indian Flag, the National Anthem and the cricket team. This was not a political stand for him, just the alienation of a Kashmiri Muslim youth. Was this a faceoff between a hinduised and often communal security set up that reached it apogee with the appointment of Jagmohan as Governor?

In his understanding of the history of Kashmir, one of the largest princely states of India, he records the Kabali raids, the bloody partition and the promise of plebiscite and autonomy after the accession to India. After Sheikh Abdulla was arrested in 1953, Kashmir was administered by a series of 'puppet' rulers and its autonomy was steadily eroded. Abdullah, after 20 years in jail, returned to Kashmir with a compromise, giving up the demand for a plebiscite. Five years after Abdullah's death, in 1987 the resentment of the Kashmiris led to the emergence of the JKLF and the support for young militants like Yasin Malik, who had been arrested and tortured. By early 1990 Indian security forces brutally repressed Kashmiris who supported independence. Peer was now 13 years old. It was the night of 20 January, Jagmohan had just been made Governor and he ordered the repression of the aspirations of the Kashmiris, fed on the slogans of Azadi since 1948. As protesters marched through southern Srinagar, 50 fell to the bullets of the CRPF. Defiance and death followed the first massacre and the stage was set for years to come. Peer learned a new vocabulary: frisking, crackdown, bunker, search, arrest, identity card, torture. Inspired by stories of Afghan Mujahedeen and Libyan freedom fighters, Bollywood movies were replaced by mujahedeen heroes fighting oppressors.

As the militants returned home from action, they were listened to like 'Marco Polo bringing in tidings of a new world'. This process of identification with militancy led to the emergence of many new stakeholders, who would in later years muddy the waters in the process of dialogue between political parties, Hurriyat groups and New Delhi. There were the border village residents who acted as guides for LOC crossings; families of militants who returned to tell their tales; mothers whose sons had died in encounters on the LOC from where bodies could not be recovered; the visit from soldiers looking for militants and beating fathers and brothers; sisters being raped or abducted. There were attacks on paramilitary forces at their camps and in their vehicles. Yet old routines continued in spite of the war.

Medical emergencies had to be faced in the midst of attacks, villages were emptied at short notice to avoid gunfire and reprisals, phones didn't work, schools had to be shut down, and a soldier stepping up to you could mean an ID search, a beating or a visit to an army camp. Collaborators identified militants to the Army and they and their families also faced reprisals. Torture

and interrogation filled young men with both terror and resistance. When schools were turned into Army camps, Peer was shifted to Aligarh, and had his first experience of train travel and India! This meant facing the karsevaks who killed several students from Kashmir in and around Aligarh. It was also the first experience of Indian Muslims being patriotic. In the classrooms no text ever related to the upheavals on the outside. Yet graveyards were filling up with the bodies of eighteen year olds. As Peer immersed himself in classics of literature, he ended up at the Law Faculty in Delhi.

Sometimes death came close, as when his parents, returning from a wedding were almost killed by a mine blast. They were targeted by someone known to the family, a classic conspirator with political ambition in a troubled zone. Yet another stakeholder had emerged in embattled Kashmir, Militants had also targeted family members active with the pro-India political parties, like the National Conference. Paranoia and depression were affecting large numbers of people who lived in dread.

In 2001 Peer was sent back to Kashmir to report on the situation there. He wrote of Afak Shah, the first suicide bomber in 1999, only seventeen, the son of a school teacher. His stories were about death, fear and humiliation. At this time, there was the attack on Parliament in Delhi. There were fears of an India-Pak war, with both states armed with nuclear weapons. Peer wrote of the farmers displaced by the regular firing of mortars across the India-Pak border. On his return, no one would rent him accommodation in Delhi, except a frail old Kashmiri Pandit, Mrs.Kaul. Yet the arrest under POTA of Geelani, a Delhi University Lecturer, Afzal Guru, a surrendered militant and his cousin, a fruit merchant, shocked Peer. The global war on terror had had its impact in Delhi too. Rajbir Singh, the encounter specialist was put in charge of investigations by Advani, the then Home minister.

Inspired by the renowned expat Kashmiri poet Aga Shahid Ali, Peer now wanted to write from a conflict zone as many before him had done in the Middle East, Africa and South East Asia. As he makes his way back, he comes across a migrant Kashmiri Pandit working as a commission agent for a travel agency. Did he feel sympathy for Him? One cannot be sure because the images of camps, soldiers and encounters have so changed the life of Kashmir that the seething anger and sadness that has transformed age old customs and traditions with curfews, shoot outs and arrests, make it difficult to see what the future might be like. Just as there were physical changes in Kashmir so also there were changes with the militants. The pro-Independence , pro Pakistan Hizbul Mujahididn was now in command, JKLF took a back seat after 1994. The Pakistani Pan Islamist Lashker-e-Toiba and later Jaish-e-mohammad became prominent. They kept to themselves and did not interact with the people as Kashmiri Militants had done. The Shopian case of

two dead women perhaps represents the close proximity of Pak based militants and Indian forces, and yet Bollywood inspires the young, even the foreign militants, on both sides to ape Salman Khan.

Could there come a day, asks Peer, when individuals would not be reduced to being suspects or military targets, shorn of their human complexity? The interlocutors feel that the political will is emerging to end the status quo. Unlike the past, even political parties do not feel that status quo on Kashmir is going to realise the aspirations of the new generation of youth. In 23 years of armed strife governance has been the first casualty. Like Peer, the people of Kashmir have so much pent up in them that dialogue on their feelings and issues has to be the first step. The response to Panchayat polls held recently shows that people want their lives back. Then they can engage with a political settlement. There is a long way to go.

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Lata Singh ed. *Theatre in Colonial India: Play-House of Power*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, pp.354, HB, Rs.895.

Scholars have paid attention to theatre historiography in the context of diverse performing arts traditions. We do not, however, have many postcolonial studies on the construction of theatre that countered the political hegemonic forces in colonial era. Lata Singh's edited volume *Theatre in Colonial India* brings together 13 vivid essays. The book closely looks at the formation of theatre as a site of modernity involving categories of caste, class and gender. It offers a critique of dominant historiography of theatre and looks beyond the purview of modernity as the only yardstick to study the colonial phenomenon.

The book offers a broad view of the development and marginalization of theatre of mixed means or a hybridized cultural practice as a result of influence of European drama. Two subaltern voices are represented in two sections. First, the space of dalit theatre/actors and second is the exclusion of gender space in colonial theatres.

Colonial Modernity

Colonial theatre as a site of modernity and appropriation draws our attention to the intervention of new aesthetics like music and plays. In particular Shakespeare holds the dominant interest throughout the British regime in several languages and culture. The chapter on the Urdu adaptation of Shakespeare by a Parsi Theatre Company is exemplary in this sense. In the essay Javed Mallick presents the nativized and refashioned Shakespearean plays to acquire a key position as against the dominant cultural politics of the 'monolithic cultural icon' for the local audience. For Mallick this was an act of cultural resistance at a popular level.

On the other hand, Urmila Biradikar and Devajeet Bandopadhyay, draw our attention to the formation of public respectability' in colonial Maharashtra and Bengal. Biradikar an adept scholar of *Sangeet Natak* tradition of Maharashtra, has ably dwelt upon 'music as a socially encoded object' in 'heroine's song'. Bandhopadhaya attempts to trace the theatre songs. The issue of hybridity of songs in theatre is depicted through the incorporations of varied repertoires. The author further explores this as either constitutive of modern theatre or shows it as a distinctive feature of Bengal theatre.

Looking at Susan Seizer' chapter deals with the plays of Tamilnadu, we find the transition from urban to rural cultural space. This form of drama was denigrated as 'low, vulgar and loose' because the genre did not have a single narrative characterization as it performed before the urban and rural audiences. This resulted in the designed exclusion of the historiography by the Tamil drama historians.

If society is reflected in the theatre and in its subjects, printed drama posters and notices mirror the history of theatre and the then social conditions. Mangai. A and V. Arasu's essay has brilliantly illustrated the politics of change and the changing attitude of society of the participation of dalits in the dramas. History from below is well presented through archival research. The representations in the posters/notices offer ideas about economy of the industry as well as taste of the public. It reveals the pulse of social change. Detailing the socio-cultural history of the region, Mangai and Arasu delineate the functioning of Buddhist organizations in the later 19th century. The consequences are seen to pave way for the making of a democratic civil society.

This discourse of subaltern theatre practices in colonial India is taken further by Sharmila Rege. A scholar of gender and caste vis-à-vis popular expressive art forms like Lavani and Powada of Maharashtra, Rege's deep sociological inclination demonstrates the 'dialectics of cultural struggle and the ways in which cultural distinctions are produced and reproduced

differently for different castes, classes and gender. Her emphasis on struggles over cultural meanings is inseparable from struggles for survival is depicted in the structure of 'feminine lavani and masculine powada'.

Gender in Theatre Performance

Feminist scholars in India and elsewhere have neglected the dimension of women's absence or even the participation in theatre. The seven essays foreground the importance of gender within them. The formation of theatre in early 20th century Maharashtra has been a site for contestation and negotiation. Sudhanva Deshpande traces the performance space that had a site for everyone—from prostitutes to high class. The exclusion of 'petty' and 'grotesque' and representation of the prescribed 'ideal women' in Marathi plays contributed to the discourse of emerging Indian middle class ideology. While reading the plays of Khadilkar, Deshpande highlights the function of middle class nationalist theatre that determines respectability and the construction of ideal women type.

The narrative analysis of Premchand's *The Actress* (1927) by Nandi Bhatia draws our attention to the actress's negotiation with social complexities—ideologies, patriarchal assumptions, nationalist maneuvers—vis-a-vis her life, role and image at the outset of anti-colonial struggle. The point of departure in the story is the stereotypical representation of female character that was shaped by the then middle class political and cultural ideology. However, she would do well to locate the writer within the socio-historical context and his personal influences in his work.

Lata Singh in her essay depicts the contentious space of gender in the theatres of colonial Bengal and Maharashtra. To fill the gap in feminist historiography, Singh's much discussed paper lays out the questions pertaining to constant negotiation and condensation of the middle class women in middle class theatre. The issue of respectability and domesticity stood high as compared to the issue of identity assertion in the genre.

The paradox of elite and popular in the colonial regime across regional theatres and the production of hybridized forms are evident in colonial Manipuri theatre. The emergence of middle class structure constructed a new aesthetic in their theatre. The Sumang Leela of Manipur is a case in point. One finds the seamless history and formation of Manipuri identity in Imokanta Singh's narration. The systematic exclusion of the indispensable parts—jester and gender—in elite theatre called Stage Leela is well documented.

Hanne M. Bruin's essay unravels the dichotomous portrayal of contemporary rural Kattaikurtu actresses in terms of 'loose women' and 'ideal women' as a result of the influence of Victorian theatre in colonial

India. The experimental project at the Kattaikkutu Gurukkutu Gurukulam is to promote the artistic and economic position. The traditional theatre conservator is concerned with the future of the rural Kattaikkuttu girls for an 'alternative female images situated at the periphery of society'.

Theatre as power house, however, could not be hegemonic as there were constant challenges through cultural activism where women actors got a space and sought avenues for building a national identity. Malini Bhattacharya's paper highlights new forms of patriarchy at the commencement of nationalism. Women in Indian Peoples' Theatre Association from conservative families-low-class, peasant and non-urban women to political families participate in order to assert their social and political identity. However, they were denied sustained participation due to the economic as well as gender barriers. Case studies of many Bengali women activists, who penned songs, are explored with a strong critique of their absence in such cultural spheres.

In a well researched article, Bishnupriya Dutt outlines the participation of English actresses' in English theatres in colonial Bengal. Interestingly her study reveals the role crossover between the adventurer women traveler and the adventurer actress traveler. Through the personal narratives, Dutt explores the colonial agenda of personifying a colonial order. The English women in India accepted 'appendages of a colonial lifestyle' which got reflected in the portrayal of dual role of actresses. While locating the alternative cultural space as an alternate sphere to the political and military roles of colonialism, this last essay enriches the scope of the historiography of the gender roles in theatrical practices.

Lata Singh's volume is a significant contribution to the politics and the complex relationship between theatre and the gender. By weaving together different socio-cultural histories, the book offers a critique of colonial modernity and reformist discourse that reinforce the dominant social structure-exclusion of women vis-a- vis their emerging identities and the emergence of the middle class in colonial India. The archaic vocabulary through a glossary is useful. While the volume fills many historical gaps in the theatre studies from an interdisciplinary perspective and covers the world of regional theatre forms vis-a-vis Indian nationalism, the editor could have brought in marginalized histories from other regions in order to explain the complexities of internal colonialism. Nonetheless, the book of three hundred and fifty four pages is well worth the time and effort for scholars across disciplines.

Raziuddin Aquil ed. *Sufism and Society in Medieval India* (Debates In Indian History And Society Series), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp.184

The volume under review includes seminal essays which form a part of the lively debate relating to the roles played by Sufis in medieval Indian society and culture. The collected essays written by experts on social history, such as Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, Aziz Ahmad, S.A.A. Rizvi, Richard M. Eaton, Carl W. Ernst, Yohanan Friedmann, J.M.S. Baljon, Simon Digby and Muzaffar Alam, cover crucial issues. The book throws light on Sufi encounters or interactions in the Indian environment and the process of Islamicization. Editor, Raziuddin Aquil is an expert on Sufism, whose scholarly introduction weaves together the varied strands of the debates on this subject and offers a framework for understanding the peculiarities of Sufism in the subcontinent.

Scholars who work on Sufism have to consult original sources in the subject available in the Persian language such as the *ma'tubat* (letters exchanged between Sufi saints), *malfuzat* (discourses of a Sufi) and *tazkiras* (biographical dictionaries). However, they differ from each other in their emphasis on various issues discussed in these sources. It is useful to study whether the scholar's emphasis on any particular issue or lack of it is conditioned by contemporary socio-economic or political circumstances.

It is generally argued that the medieval Indian Sufis, especially the Chishtis, distanced themselves from politics and government, which according to them represented materialism. It has been claimed that they refused to accept money or *inam* grant (tax free land grant) from the rulers and preferred to establish their hospice (*jamatkhana* or *khanqah*) in areas far away from the epicentre of political power. Their indifference to proselytizing activities has been emphasized both by Nationalist and Marxist school of historiography. Another stereotyped notion about South Asian Sufism is that the representatives of the *wajudi* doctrine are described as liberals and those who subscribe to the doctrine of *wahdat as Shuhud* are projected as conservatives interested in conversion. The *wajidis* hold that God is reflected in everything including the non-Muslims, so Hindus should not be denounced as infidels. The *Shuhudi* group on the other hand insist that everything is from God which does not mean that 'He' is reflected in everything. The problem with traditional historiography on Sufism is that it often derecognizes the heterogeneity or complexity of the Sufi orders

(*silsilahs*) and fails to note that the demarcating line between various Sufi orders or between Sufis and the ulama are often blurred. This constraint is largely caused by the overtly Chishti-centric and North India centric approaches of traditional scholarship who also had the compulsion of strengthening the symbols of cultural pluralism in the nascent Indian State emerging from the challenges posed by the Two Nation Theory and its protagonists.

Commitments to pluralism and secularism are valued in the context of political violence that has marred communal relations in the subcontinent during the last six decades. Under such circumstances scholars have been selective in their emphasis on certain ritual dynamics related to Sufism such as the *langar* (free kitchen) which acted as a common platform on which people representing different castes, classes and religions could converge. How the *langar* could epitomize brotherhood and egalitarianism could be fully appreciated by the Sikh Gurus too.

In recent decades, a historiographical shift is noticeable in the scholarly works of Muzaffar Alam, Simon Digby and Richard Eaton, who are regarded as experts on Islam and Sufism. They are also committed to the idea of secularism and have not entirely abandoned the older 'pluralistic' approach. But by adopting a more empirically sustainable approach they have been successful in exposing the complexities of Sufism in the South Asian context. Several scholars of Sufism who were influenced by previous masters in the field continue to adhere to the older line. Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence belong to this group. Yet, contrary to the assertions of stalwarts like Nizami and one of his predecessors, Muhammad Habib, a number of other historians have noted in recent times that Sufis, including the illustrious Chishtis of the Sultanate period, did meddle in politics. Some of them visited the reigning Sultans. Others regarded it below their dignity to go to the court and follow its rituals. A section of them may have felt that reconciliation with a large majority of non-Muslim population of loosely conquered territories would be easier if they could maintain a tactical distance with the rulers.

Major Sufi orders such as the Chishtis, Suhrawardis, and Naqshbandis were against the idea of settling in forests or at lonely places. They took part in the Muslim campaigns for territorial expansion, which were often portrayed as fighting *jihad* (holy wars) against the infidels. Some also contributed to the lasting Muslim control of newly annexed territories, in the process carving out a 'spiritual domain' (*wilayat*) for themselves. Sometimes this *wilayat* of a charismatic Sufi was perceived as a potential threat both by the custodians of political domain (ruler) and religious domain (ulama). The Sufi saint's following among the soldiers and nobles often alarmed the rulers. On other occasions the rulers viewed the *wilayat* as a legitimizer and offered

patronage to many ritual practices associated with it. This they thought necessary for the perpetuity of their dynasty. This symbiotic relationship between the Sufis and Sultans enabled the former to settle down as landlords, beginning generally with the revenue-free land grants with hereditary rights (*inam* or *madad-i-mash*). Eaton analyses how the Sufis of Bijapur could emerge as a landed gentry.

Apart from understanding the nature of relationship between the Sufi and the Sultan it is also useful to study the long process of Islamic acculturation which took place around the *dargahs* (shrines) sometimes culminating in the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. In this way local Muslim communities could be formed. Sufi literature highlights how this process was resisted from time to time by the custodians of non-Muslim religious traditions. The response of the ulama, the guardians of Sunni Muslim orthodoxy towards the Sufis is also very complex. Such complex issues have been handled in a sophisticated manner in the articles of Eaton, Digby and Muzaffar Alam.

There are also scholars who in spite of being empirically strong did not take a pluralist/secularist approach to Sufism. For example, Aziz Ahmad and I.H. Qureshi have enriched our understanding of Sufism and Islam in the Indian environment but have represented a Muslim separatist position. The former's article has been included in the present volume. Unlike Nizami, (Chapter I) the separatist school does not find any composite nature in Bhakti or Sufi movements. They are emphatic on the proselytizing nature of Sufism and viewed the Bhakti movement merely as a mechanism introduced by the Hindu society to resist the spread of Islam. Aziz Ahmad's quasi cynical interpretation was influenced by the post-Partition Muslim predicament in South Asia. Articles by Friedmann and Baljon throw new light on two reformists, Sirhindi, a near contemporary of Akbar, and Waliullah, who experienced the decline of the Mughals during the eighteenth century. It has been argued that Sirhindi's attitude towards Hindus was context specific. Although he believed in the superiority of Islam, but was not interested in conversion. Eclectic Waliullah on the other hand tried to minimize the controversies in Indian Islam in an age of decline. This Naqshbandi Sufi even wrote a letter to the Afghan warlord Abdali, inviting the latter to save the Mughal domain from the Maratha onslaughts. Such political preoccupation of a Sufi was contrary to the image of a Sufi provided by nationalist historians. By relying on a huge variety of Sufi sources the experts on the one hand have been successful in analyzing the crucial social and political role played by the Sufis of medieval South Asia. On the other they have been able to recharge the debate relating to conversion and Islamization in medieval India. The get up of the book is excellent and this user-friendly volume

provides the experts, enthusiasts and the general readers with a rare opportunity of experiencing a wide range of views on the subject.

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Amar Farooqui, *Sindias and the Raj: Princely Gwalior c., 1800-1850*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2011; HB, pp. ix + 156. Rs. 650.

The role of feudatory and princely states of Central India in stabilizing colonial rule and establishing its supremacy in the heartland of the Indian subcontinent has only been minimally explored. Even premier historians writing the histories of the Maratha period have largely concentrated on the role of the big five Maratha regimes in the expansion of the empire rather than the on the crisis and internal changes that were brought about within the princely states through the expansion of colonial capitalism. This book, *Sindias and the Raj* not only fills this historiographical gap but also throws up some interesting questions about the nature of the colonial rupture in princely states. Written by a vastly experienced historian this book draws upon Farooqui's earlier well developed understanding of the political economy of early colonial capitalism in the region. However unlike his earlier work, the focus of the book is more on the politics of the ruling class in the princely state and its complex and changing relationship with the British.

The book elaborates at least three important theme with regard to the study of pre-colonial states and their integration into colonial capitalism. The first contests the general understanding that most of the princely states were collaborators of the British and largely aligned with the ruling classes. In contrast to this understanding the book in fact shows how palace intrigues and power sharing agreements and conflicts were related to ways in which different sections of the ruling elites responded to colonial interference. Of particular significance is the book's exploration of the role and strategy that Baiza Bai used to deal with the British. In his analysis, the author shows Baiza Bai to be an independent minded ruler who held an important position in spurring and propelling the anti-colonial revolts in the Gwalior state. However, the continuous rebellions against colonial interventions in the second quarter of the nineteenth century showed that power sharing

struggles within the ruling elite could play a role as a catalyst in propelling anti-colonial revolts and Farooqui's analysis of the 1843 rebellion only strengthens this point. In this sense this book also contributes towards our understanding of the trajectory of anti-colonial movements in the princely states.

The second important theme of this book concerns the relationship between the emergence of an independent local business class and its complex relationship with the rulers on the one hand, and colonial expansion on the other hand. Drawing from his earlier work on opium, the author shows how the interests of the Sindia rulers were intimately linked to the development of an indigenous banking and business class. In doing this the analysis within the book implies that protection of indigenous business interests may have also spurred the initial anti-British rebellions. The chapter on opium trade provides us an overview of the influence of the local bankers and financiers on the rulers of the 1830s. This aspect is also mentioned in the earlier discussion on the role and profile of Baiza Bai, who had high investments with banking firms. Initially, this helped her to negotiate the stability of her regency with the British. Such glimpses of the relationship between the local trader, financier and producer interests lead to important questions about trajectory of the development of the late pre-colonial and early colonial states with whom the British were negotiating. Were then the rebellions of 1843 and 1857 (in which the author has gone into some detail) merely an expression of anti colonial sentiment or did this anti colonial sentiment also seek to protect the interests of the home grown local business class in the heart of the Central Indian hinterland? The theoretical trajectory unleashed by this book can reveal interesting answers to this question and can lead to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the colonial transition. In the process it can also lead us into newer insights about the character and social basis of the pre-colonial states.

The third underlying theme of this book concerns the reflections of the author on the nature of the mercenary army of the princely states. The chapter on the analysis of the Pindari Interlude analyses the important role that these bandit soldiers played in the contestation and entry of the British in the region. It also dwells upon the relationship between the Pindaris and the Gwalior army. In doing so the analysis reflects upon the temporary, fluid and irregular character of the military supporting the Sindia rulers. At one point the author even observes that the military of the state had stopped expanding by the 1830s and was not capable of territorial expansion. The book attributes the constriction of the space for territorial expansion to the emerging contradictions between the British and the Sindia ruling class. It also devotes a large part of its analysis to the intra-ruling class rivalries that

were largely created by colonial intrusion. However it underplays the complex conflicts of the tribal landholders and chieftains with both the Maratha rulers as well as the British. These conflicts occurred from the late eighteenth century onwards, and often provided the Maratha princes broad-based support against the British. In many cases the tribal chieftains paid tributes to the Maratha rulers in the form of money and service in the military. By doing this they also extended and defended the political influence of the Marathas against the British. Thus the peasantry of the princely states paid taxes and tributes on the one hand and also provided the men for the irregular mercenary army on the other hand. Thus the success of the British against highland and tribal chieftains in the early 19th century could have played a crucial role in the constriction of space for the expansion of the Sindia army and its territorial influence. Though the book provides several openings for such a structural and strategic analysis, the factors influencing the changes in the military and state infrastructure remain relatively unexplored in this book.

From the above analysis it is quite clear that Amar Farooqui's work has once again added to our understanding of 19th century Central India. And in doing so it has opened up new paths for further research of princely states and their role in the entry and establishment of colonial capitalism. The book is written in a simple and readable analytical style which will enable scholars and students to discern the nuances that have hitherto been missed in the analysis of Central Indian princely states. Hence this book should form an essential reading for all those who engage in the debates on the political economy of late pre-colonial and the early colonial period.

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Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power: Explorations in Early Indian History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2010, pp. 386, Rs. 850

The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power is a timely publication of a long-awaited compendium of Kumkum Roy's erudite researches on gender relations in early-Indian history. The decades since the 1980s have seen the discipline of 'gender studies' flower in Indian academia, and Roy's career

graph in the field of gender research is virtually synonymous with the take-off in this field, and her many writings anthologized in this book and previously published in a variety of prestigious journals are ample proof of that.

The book outlines Roy's long-term concern with a myriad themes, more prominently among them the nature of kinship, household, marriage, reproduction, and sexuality. Roy underscores how the category 'woman' was not a homogeneous, unified, naturally given category. One charge that is often brought against feminist writings is that it is unifocal, dealing with sources of women's oppression. Roy's work shows that it is necessary to come to terms with heterogeneity to ensure that differences are not suppressed in order to retrieve women's past. To be aware of gender hierarchies, but also of gender differences, and varieties of patriarchies which were in operation in any given society and within which some women could exercise and be seen to exercise a semblance of power.

The essays in part I of the book examine Pali and Sanskrit sources for female voices, representation of gender relations in the urban world, as also the courtesanal tradition. Her paper on women and men donors at Sanchi, and 'the other Ksetra' contains a scholarly analysis of early-Prakrit inscription. Both the papers show how women were by and large located within the framework of the patrilineal kinship structure, even though these inscriptions covered non-brahmanical Jaina and Buddhist communities. One of the primary concerns of the feminists has been to deal with the politics of reproduction. The control of female procreative and sexual capacity has been one of the unifying threads of patriarchal societies across cultures and times. Roy's sectional presidential address to the Indian History Congress even while examining the elitist patriarchal concerns with reproduction in the sastric tradition, also looks at other possibilities where control of either female sexuality or procreation was not as straight-forward. In her paper defining the household, she looks at Manusmṛti and how its prescriptions were modified, abandoned, or even tacitly reversed in Medhatithi's commentary Manubhasya. Historically Roy attributes these modifications and reversals to the reality of social practices in 9th century Kashmir, the region from which Medhatithi hailed. This paper shows that even while there are structures in Brahmanical patriarchy, there are also spaces within these structures where the normative injunctions either don't apply or are jettisoned. In her paper on Kalhana's Rajatarangini, a text which is both region-specific and time-specific, makes the study of gender relations herein all the more valuable. This paper tends to flesh out her ideas on different kinds of patriarchies and the subversive strategies that were employed by women to create greater space for themselves.

The second part of this book deals with 'interrogating textual traditions'.

Roy brings her erudition to bear on such varied texts as Vedic Grhasutras, Dharmasutras, Arthasastras, Manusmṛti, Jatakas, and Kamasutra. In the process of engaging with such a rich textual tradition, Roy convincingly shows that using this source in the writing of history makes for both good and viable history. Moreover, in the construction of the social history of early India it is perhaps the most useful source. The tensions of caste, class and gender will either remain unexplored or will be glossed over if one were to rely only on the material evidence. The textual tradition is particularly useful in delineating hierarchies which exist in the society, and the dissent that is mounted against them, and the variety of strategies that are employed to subvert them. Roy's many papers in this section richly illustrate this social reality. In her essay 'Marriage as Communication', Roy looks at the prescriptive Grhasutras and the Brahmanical patriarchal view of marriage, concerned solely with domesticating women, she then contrasts it with the non-ritualised marriage practices in the epic narratives where polyandry and swayamvara all jostle together, showing in the process that there were alternative understandings of marriage. In other words, as she puts it pithily, "there was possibly no absolute identity between communication about marriage and communication through the enactment of marriage rituals. In her paper 'Invoking Authority', Roy investigates the three principal shastric texts belonging to three major domains of puruṣārtha – artha, dharma and kama – she makes an interesting and thoughtful observation that while Kautilya and Manu are not as frequently cited in the Arthasastra and Manusmṛti, and even the predecessors are not as regularly invoked in these two texts, the frequency of citing both previous authorities as also the author Vatsyayana in the Kamasutra is fairly high. She wonders whether this was because, unlike the domain of artha and dharma puruṣārtha, there was greater need for 'name-dropping' for regulating sexual relations, and thereby give the domain of pleasure and desire a new legitimacy. In the paper 'The King's Household: Structure/Space in the Sastric Tradition', Roy focuses on the above-mentioned three shastras again, and argues that while the royal household was central from the perspective of both state and society, its relationship to both the commoners household and the courtesan household is also significant. She rightly concludes that all the three strands of the shastric tradition are firmly entrenched in gender-stratified contexts, and reinforce this gender-stratification in a variety of ways. Yet there are also spaces within these shastric traditions and these spaces emerge not intrinsically from within the tradition, but are an accommodation of a social reality which cannot be wished away. In her study of the Jatakas, Roy analyses the notion of justice, particularly in the context of adultery. Although Roy's primary source here is the Jataka, she keeps juxtaposing the empirical

evidence garnered from these tales with the brahmanical evidence furnished by texts like the Arthasastra and Manusmṛti which makes for a more encompassing analysis of the 'treacherous terrain of adultery'. Roy's paper 'Unravelling the Kamasutra', was first published in the Indian Journal of Gender Studies. Roy here comments on how the sexual relations are fashioned in the text in the context of a nayaka-centred household, and all sexual relations are traced through and revolve around him. Furthermore, the sexual relations were primarily heterosexual and gender-stratified. Nonetheless, Roy has perceptive comments to make on non-normative sexual relations such as lesbian sex, as also sexual relations in the *stri-rajya* where the socio-sexual hierarchy was found reversed. For the non-experts on ancient Indian history, one of the most interesting sections of her paper, is her analysis of how the gendered attitude is reflected even in the modern editions of this ancient text. In the last essay of this book, Roy takes up the early medieval biography of Ramapala by Sandhyakaranandi. Since the days of the early Indologists who looked upon biographical literature starting from Bana's *Harsacarita* as the first real historical literature in ancient India, historians have been zealous in mining these historical biographies. Roy, however, does not follow a simplistic route vis-à-vis this biography. She tries, instead, to examine the strategies that underlie its composition. One such strategy of Sandhyakaranandi that Roy highlights is how he made use of the Ramayana story of Valmiki, and even while lip-service to the story line, managed to achieve a significant re-working of the well-known narrative, which fitted in more with the political and personal career of Ramapala.

Shalini Shah
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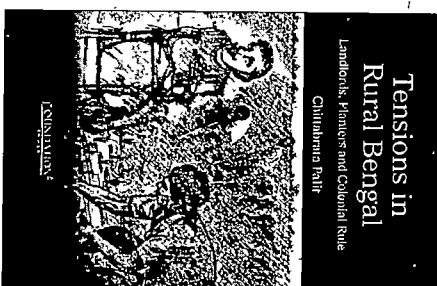
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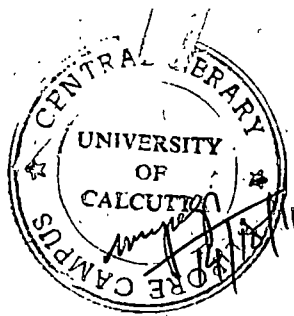
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Editorial

The eminent historian Irfan Habib said at a recent academic event in New Delhi that the real upholders and beneficiaries of the caste-system in India were not so much the Brahmins as the ruling classes, which is why the exclusively anti-Brahmin orientation of the contemporary dalit movement was so inapposite. Shireen Moosvi's lead article in the current issue of *Social Scientist* substantiates this point, by highlighting how even the Muslim rulers in early medieval India adjusted themselves, and lent support, to the caste system. This may appear strange at first sight, given the egalitarian thrust of Islam. But this egalitarianism never came in the way of the unequal treatment meted out to the slaves, enrolled from among the conquered people, by Muslim rulers everywhere in the world. And treating the oppressed castes in the same manner as slaves was but an easy transition for the medieval Indian rulers. Where there were exceptions, such as with Muhammad Tughluq, under whose reign many from lower castes were able to climb up to occupy important positions, the reason had to do with the exigencies of the situation rather than any conviction that caste divisions deserved to be set aside.

The limitations of anti-Brahminism alone as the ideological cement for holding together a socio-political movement were exposed by the post-first world war experience in the Madras Presidency, which is recounted in Raj Sekhar Basu's paper. The formation of an anti-Brahmin front which brought the Justice Party to power in the elections held as a consequence of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, soon gave way to a fracturing of this front and accusations by the Adi Dravidas, consisting of the so-called "untouchable castes", that the Justice Party administration had ignored their needs and aspirations. As distinct from the Brahmin-dominated Congress and the non-Brahmin upper-caste-dominated Justice Party, the Adi-Dravidas in the early 1920s increasingly began to express their own separate identity through their own organizations. This separate stream that emerged tended to see colonialism as an egalitarian force against the institutionalized inequalities of the pre-existing system; hence it emphasized socio-political empowerment of the so-called

“untouchable castes” even to the exclusion of the anti-colonial struggle, i.e. within the existing order; and it even came in the way of joint struggles of workers of all castes, as in the case of the strike at the Buckingham Carnatic Mills.

There were powerful reasons of course for the assertion of this separate identity among workers, since the workers from the so-called “untouchable castes” were steeped in even more acute penury than their colleagues from other castes; but the beneficiary from this lack of unity among workers was British capital. This form of what would nowadays be called “identity politics” flourished in the twenties in the Madras Presidency and elsewhere because the anti-colonial struggle was still trapped within a problematic that allowed it to do so; it was only in the 1930s, especially after the Karachi Congress which laid down, in a manner of speaking, the outlines of a “social contract” that could constitute the basis for the formation of a free India, that the problematic itself began to change.

P.K.Shukla’s paper which covers the struggles of the *adivasi* peasantry over a somewhat longer period brings to the fore the contradiction between the same two tendencies among the *adivasis*, as came to exist among the so-called “untouchable castes”: one was the tendency of struggle against colonialism and the other was a tendency of keeping out of the anti-colonial struggle and trying to carve out a separate identity, and making demands on the basis of it, within the existing order. The former concerned itself with class issues and wanted to make common cause with other social forces; the latter concerned itself with “identity politics”, emphasized exclusivism and pushed class issues to the background.

While the possibility of breaking out of one’s assigned position within the caste hierarchy was denied to most castes, one group that did manage to do so according to the paper by R.N. Mishra was the *śilpis* or artists. Assigned to a low caste status by the *Dharmashastra*, they managed over the centuries, through the acquisition of skills and knowledge, to obtain wealth and privileges that would not have normally come their way. Some even rose to become chieftains with titles like *ranaka*, *thakkura*, and *samanta*.

This issue has three additional pieces: one by Shamir Hassan is on the Oslo accord on Palestine; it explores both the background of the accord and its limitations, which, as anticipated by many including Edward Said, produced renewed conflict rather than any lasting peace. The second piece is a review article by Uma Maheshari on Suchetana Chattopadhyay’s recently published biographical work on Muzaffar Ahmad, which explores both the personal journey of Muzaffar Ahmad and the ambience of Calcutta at the time, and; the third piece is a review article by Indrani Sanyal.

The Medieval State and Caste

Shireen Moosvi

The relationship between the caste system and the state has been a crucial one for both institutions in India. While Ashoka might have ignored castes – whether *varna* or *jati* – in his inscriptions, at least from the second century AD, prevention of ‘admixture of caste’ had become a recognised obligation for rulers.¹ To a degree, the *Dharmashastra* texts too prescribed this among the ruler’s duties, as did the *Arthashastra*.

An interesting question arises as to what would have been the attitude of rulers who did not come from within caste society. The great Kushanas, whose homeland was Bactria, paid no particular homage to the sanctity of caste in their numerous inscriptions.² Yet this did not mean that they rejected the caste system or in any way desired to undermine it. In medieval India, rulers who were Muslims found themselves in the same position as the Kushanas, and we have here the benefit of a comparative richness of record which enables us to see how the state under Muslim rulers dealt with caste and with customs of the caste order.

All societies in historical times have had hierarchies of one kind or another. The Arab society in which Islam arose had deep-rooted concepts of tribal differentiation, which continued under Islam. When the Arab Caliphs conquered Iran they let alone the agrarian structure, headed by *marzbans* and *dihqans*, and treated Zoroastrians as People of the Book. In fact it was the converted Iranians, the *mawali*, who received their particular scorn, so that they formed almost a depressed class within the Islamic community.³

With this experience in Iran behind them, the Arab policy in Sind and southern Punjab, which the Caliph’s armies occupied in 712–14, could well have been predicted. But we are fortunate that we have a very full record of their measures in that remarkable work, the *Chachnama*, which is a Persian translation made in 1216–17 by ‘Ali Kufi, of annals of the pre-Arab dynasty of Sind and annals of the conquest compiled soon after that long-drawn event.⁴

The Arabs now encountered a people who culturally were intrinsically hostile to them. To them, as a report in the *Chach-*

nama put it, they were "Chandalas and beef-eaters".⁵ But the Arabs knew that after conquest the higher castes, to whom they themselves were no better than outcastes, must be conciliated. Thus their commander Muhammad b. Qasim, after occupying Brahmanabad, the major city of Sind, "held the Brahmins in esteem and ordered that they be reassured. In all their affairs, there was no restriction or prohibition. He appointed each of them to a post. He realized that no misdeed or dishonesty could be committed by them." In fact, we are told, he appointed them to all the posts they held under Chach, the founder of the defeated Brahman dynasty, and offered honours and rewards to those whom they deemed their religious leaders and scholars.⁶

The arrangements with the Brahmins were accompanied by a continuance of repression of those whom the previous Brahman dynasty had kept in a humiliating position. This was particularly evident in the treatment of the communities which the *Chachnama* called Jatts. The Jatts were described by Yuan Chwang, though not by this name, as pastoralists, "neither rich nor poor", Buddhists formally but "without any moral rules".⁷ Chach, the Brahman ruler, had imposed all kinds of constraints on them, forbidding them from wearing anything but coarse clothing, and requiring them to walk barefoot and to be always accompanied by dogs.⁸ When Muhammad b. Qasim was informed of these measures, he confirmed each one of them specifically, including the one that required Jatts to go about accompanied by dogs. He also exclaimed, "what detestable people!"⁹ Balazuri confirmed the imposition of the dog regulation in relation to the Jatts in his *Futuh al-Baldan*.¹⁰

The next line of Muslim rulers who established themselves in the Indus basin were the Ghaznavids. By then information about the Indian caste system had grown immensely and there was an air of comprehension about its principles. The great Alberuni, in his *Kitab al-Hind*, c. 1035, took a surprisingly tolerant view of it, even of its harsher elements.¹¹ Another Ghaznavid text, rather little known so far, has a most interesting description of the caste system. Kaikaus, writing in 1082-83, said:

The people of India are different from other people in that while all peoples get mixed up together, the Hindus do not. From the time of Adam, their custom is that men of different occupations do not intermarry. Thus greengrocers marry with greengrocers' daughters, butchers with butchers', bakers with bakers', a soldier with a soldier's, a Brahman with a Brahman's. Thus every category of people among them has a different nature. I cannot enumerate all, since this will divert this book from its main purpose. But the best of them are benevolent, as well as wise and brave; one of such is either a Brahman

or a Raut¹² or a Kirar [merchant]. The Brahman is wise, the Raut brave, the Kirar a head of householders. The Brahman is (usually) a scholar, the Raut a good soldier.¹³

Quite clearly, there is here not only no animosity towards the caste system, but almost an appreciation of it.

Mahmud of Ghazni is known for his devastating invasions of India; but in conducting his administration there was little prejudice against absorbing Hindus into it. How far caste affected this recruitment is illustrated by the example of one of Mahmud's favourite Hindu officers. Tilak was the son of a barber, but "skilled, experienced, with command over language, and a fine hand in both Hindwi and Persian writing". For a long time he had lived in Kashmir, where he had learnt "javelin-throwing, coquetry and magic", the last probably meaning Tantricism. Clearly, Tilak, whether or not a barber's son, had the qualities of a courtier and scholar; and, catching the eye of Mahmud, had risen high among his counsels.¹⁴ It should however be remembered that in India, there are other cases of persons who had made careers at the court without belonging to the higher castes. We have the case of Bhadradeva, a Kayastha and a gardener (*aramika*) by hereditary profession, who rose to high office in Kashmir under Samgranaraja (1003-28), much to the annoyance of Kalhana, writing some 125 years later.¹⁵ Tilak is not described as a Kayastha, but he could well have been one.

It is worth considering whether coexistence with the caste system, a necessity for the prosperity of Muslim dynasties and the court, did not begin to influence local Muslim communities. Thus, in 1333, Ibn Battuta noted that the Sumras ('Samira' in Arabic plural), who claimed that they were descendants of Arab conquerors of over 600 years ago, "never eat with anyone ... nor do they marry anyone outside their clan, nor do they allow anyone to marry into it".¹⁶ On the other hand, the Hindu mercantile castes, of the sort Kaikaus called 'Kirar', flourished. Their great centre was Multan, whose Hindu merchants, called 'Multanis', appear in the pages of Ziya Barani as bankers who lent large sums to the great nobles of Delhi during the time of Balban, making their profits out of the interest earned on the loans.¹⁷ Clearly, they had grown into a rich caste during the earlier regimes at Multan, presumably those of the Arab amirs and the Ghaznavids, since Multan was already a large city in the tenth century.¹⁸ Castes thus remained an integral feature of society under both the Arabs and the Ghaznavids.

The relationship between the nobles of the Delhi Sultanate and the Multanis, which we have just mentioned, indicates a similar association of the Delhi Sultanate with caste-defined classes. There are many other indications of this association as well. Until the time of Firoz Tughluq

(1351-88), Brahmans were exempted from the *jizya* or poll-tax on non-Muslims;¹⁹ and the court poet Amir Khusrau (1318) lavished all possible praise on the Brahmans for their knowledge and wisdom.²⁰ It was possible in 1276 for a poet on behalf of a merchant's family from Uchh settled in Delhi, to imagine that "with Sultan Balban as sovereign Lord Vishnu could now retire and sleep on the ocean of milk".²¹ But there is no evidence that any of the depressed castes secured better treatment. On the other hand, it appears that when 'Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) ordered that the *khot* (village headman) and the Balahar (a menial caste of village watchmen) were to be treated at par in payment of tax,²² he in fact imposed a tax on even the small plots that the Balahars received in lieu of their traditionally fixed services to the village. Indeed, the attitude of contempt towards the 'menial' castes is shown by Ziya Barani's use of the words "*bhangri*, *bhangri*, *khurafati*" as abuses against a rebel officer,²³ *bhangri* and *bhangri* being popular words of contempt for the caste of sweepers or scavengers.²⁴

Since Barani himself was an important spokesman of the Sultanate bureaucracy with a very definite view of social hierarchy, which he believed it was the duty of the state to protect,²⁵ a few words may be devoted here to the question of how far his views were affected by the caste system. There is no question that within Islamic thought there was a strong hierarchical streak, which, for example, greatly distinguished between the free-born and the slave. Thus Barani, while describing the great Slaves of Iluttmish to whose ranks his favourite Sultan, Ghiyasuddin Balban, belonged, held that these slaves were intrinsically low-born, being "vain fellows and purchased ones".²⁶ Or, when he blamed Alau'ddin Khalji for promoting low-born ones, their categories had nothing to do with caste - the upstarts were "worthless persons (?), clerks, low-born revenue-collectors (*shiqdaran*) and foolish slaves".²⁷ But, as his words of abuse for Nizam Mayin show, he was not above incorporating the lower castes among the detestable, low-born officials that Muhammad Tughluq (1324-51) promoted in his last days. The entire passage is worth quoting:

He so far raised the low-born Najaba, son of a minstrel, that his station surpassed those of most nobles and gave Gujarat, Multan and Badaun to him; and so also he raised to greatness Aziz Khammar (Distiller), and his brother, and Firoz the barber; Manka, the cook; Mas'ud the Distiller, and Ladha, the gardener; and such other gems of manikins and gave them posts and territories; and Shaikh Babu, son of a *nayak*,²⁸ the weaver, he gave a place near himself and raised the status and position of such a manikin among men; and into the hands of Pira the *mali* (of gardener caste), who belongs to the meanest and basest of the mean and base in India (lit. Hind and Sind) put the charge of the

Finance Ministry (*Diwan-i Wizarat*), putting him above the highest nobles, commanders, governors, and principal revenue-assignees; and to Muqbil, the slave of Ahmad Ayaz, who in both external looks and inner self was a shame to all slaves, he granted the deputy-ministership of Gujarat, which is a position to be filled by the great Khans and ministers of repute. ...²⁹

Here, scorn for slaves is mixed with contempt for the low castes, so that two traditions of hierarchy are combined.

Barani's theory of the cycle that beset the Delhi Sultanate, in which the rise of each generation of upstarts tended to supplant another by reason of the ruler's need to protect his power from the pretensions of the existing nobility, cannot be dismissed as the mere fantasy of a disappointed careerist.³⁰ There is no reason to doubt the specific instances he gave, especially from Muhammad Tughluq's reign, of which he was a well-placed witness, having been one of the Sultan's personal aides (*muqarrab*) for some twenty years. But such cases of promotion of the 'low-born' did not follow from any deliberate policy of the state against class or caste hierarchy. Barani himself quoted Sultan Muhammad Tughluq as repeatedly saying that "the low-born crew are disloyal, untrue to salt, ungrateful, mischievous and evil", and so to be perceived as a greater enemy than any idol (by a Muslim).³¹ And yet, says Barani, the same Sultan in practice promoted such men. Clearly, the deviation from the proclaimed course was due to the exigencies of polity, and not because of any demands of faith or equity. As Barani tells us, the established military elite, *amiran-i sada* ('centurions'), were turning into rebels all over the country;³² and we can then see why the Sultan should have relied more and more on strata outside the established 'political' classes. There was no desire at all to declare a war against either the caste system or the perceptions of hierarchy in the Islamic tradition. Both continued to be regarded as permanent features of the society on which the Sultanate rested.

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Notes

1. As is well-known, this first occurs in the Nasik inscription of Vasishthiputra Pulamavi, the Satavahana ruler, c. AD 150, the Prakrit phrase being *chatu-vana-sankarasa* (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VIII, pp. 60ff.)
2. My reading on which this statement is based is limited to Sten Konow, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions* (= *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. II), and K G

- Krishnan (ed.), *Prakrit and Sanskrit Epigraphs*, II, Mysore, 1989. The more recently discovered inscriptions in Bactrian in Afghanistan are not relevant to the issue here.
3. A classic exposition of these developments will be found in Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, English translation by Khuda Baksh.
4. *Chachnama*, edited by Muhammad Daudpota, Hyderabad-Deccan, 1938.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
7. Sii-Yu-Ki, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, II, translated by Samuel Beal, pp. 273-74.
8. *Chachnama*, pp. 47-48.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-16.
10. H M Elliot and J Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, I, p. 128.
11. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, I, pp. 99-104.
12. Prakrit for *raja*putra.
13. Kaikaus, *Qabus-nama*, Tehran, 1352 solar, pp. 116-17.
14. Abu'l Fazl Baihaqi, *Tarikh-i Baihaqi*, edited by Ali Akbar Faiyaz, Meshed, 1383 solar, pp. 385ff.
15. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, VII.38-43, translated by A Stein, I, p. 270.
16. *Travels of Ibn Battuta*, translated by Hamilton Gibb, Vol. III, pp. 596-97.
17. Ziya Barani, *Tarikh-i Firozshahi*, Bib. Ind. edn, p. 120.
18. As described by the Arab geographers: cf. G Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, p. 331.
19. Sams Siraj 'Afif, *Tarikh-i Firozshahi*, Bib. Ind. edn, pp. 382-83.
20. *Nuh Sipihr*, edited by M.Wahid Mirza, London, 1950, pp. 162-63.
21. Palam Baoli inscription, text and translation in Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 9, 13.
22. Barani, *Tarikh-i Firozshahi*, p. 287.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 487.
24. See Platts, s.v. *bhangi*. *Khurafati* means fool, knave, one who speaks foolish nonsense.
25. Cf. Irfan Habib, 'Two Indian Theorists of the State: Barani and Abu'l Fazl', in D N Jha and E Vanina (eds.), *Mind over Matter*, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 15-29.
26. Barani, *Tarikh-i Firozshahi*, p. 27.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 405.
28. So printed. But it could be *payak*, an unmounted trooper.
29. Barani, *Tarikh-i Firozshahi*, p. 505.
30. See Irfan Habib, 'Barani's Theory of the Delhi Sultanate', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1-2, 1980-81, pp. 99ff.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 504-05.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 516-17.

The Making of Adi Dravida Politics in Early Twentieth Century Tamil Nadu

Raj Sekhar Basu

In several parts of British India, though there were attempts by social categories commonly labelled as 'untouchables' to organise themselves from the late nineteenth century, the depressed class movements really came into prominence in the 1920s. Some social theorists have argued that these movements started in the context of strong social reform and anti-caste movements which not only penetrated into the ranks of the middle-caste peasantry, but also had a profound impact on the national movement, which by then had succeeded in developing a genuine mass base. In fact the depressed class movements were profoundly influenced by the deliberations that surrounded the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, but the most crucial aspects of their background seem to have been the massive economic and political upheavals of the immediate post-war period. It has been argued that these movements often had 'linguistic-national' organisational forms, and that their intensity varied according to the specific social milieu of the different areas in which they came up. However, there was considerable exchange of ideas at the all-India level too, and by the 1930s this was beginning to take the form of all-India conferences – particularly when Ambedkar surged ahead of his competitors to become the most important leader of the depressed classes movement which later came to be known as the Scheduled Castes movement.¹

In most cases, while there was a fairly well-marked ambivalence on the part of the depressed castes vis-à-vis the upper caste Hindu-led anti-caste movements, their relationship with the nationalist movement displayed a pronounced sense of antagonism. With the possible exception of Kerala where the Congress leadership was involved in anti-caste campaigns, the leadership of the Congress in other parts of India was mostly limited to upper-caste social conservatives who were not only indifferent to the demands of the depressed castes, but also actively resisted them. This alienation from the organised national movement led by the Congress resulted not just from the self-interest of a miniscule leadership, but was part of a consciousness that affected large sections of the depressed castes.²

Despite their very diverse origins, the depressed caste movements shared many things in common. In the first place, there was commonality in thinking vis-à-vis the usage of the prefix 'Adi', which was viewed as the most important instrument behind the construction of distinct communitarian identities. The use of the term 'Adi' enabled the depressed caste leaders to convince their followers, as well as their upper-caste adversaries and the apparently supportive British bureaucracy, that the depressed castes were the original inhabitants of the country and that their traditions were based on justice and equality. The depressed caste leaders totally rejected the idea of caste and the resultant implications of *chaturvarnya* and *varnashrama* dharma. Such ideas were believed to have been imposed by the conquering Aryan groups to subjugate and divide the natives. Subsequently, there was rejection of Hinduism as the religion of the invaders and one that served as the main support base of the hierarchical Hindu social order. These movements also represented a direct fight against the feudal forms of bondage that were widely prevalent in rural areas. The struggle for education and employment was also integrated into these movements, and the depressed castes saw in these initiatives an escape from feudal bondage to an ambience that guaranteed modern industrial and service employment. Thus these movements became highly involved in activities with a distinct social orientation, like the founding of schools, hostels and educational associations, and also espoused demands for scholarships and educational benefits, apart from reservation in government employment. A result of all these initiatives was the system of concessions, which continues to be a controversial subject even today. This partially explains why the depressed caste movements failed to merge with the working class movements or to become a part of the national movement in its fight to uproot feudal relations. Hence the depressed caste movements remained isolated, and fell into the trap of asking for concessions from the nationalists and the British ruling groups.³

In this paper, an attempt is made to identify the course of depressed class politics in Tamil Nadu since the early decades of the twentieth century. It is argued here that depressed class politics in Tamil Nadu did not follow a single trajectory, but remained caught between different sets of ideologies and political parties. In some cases, it seemed to have an autonomous status with no connections to mainstream politics, but in other cases, there seemed to be an inclination to ally with the more dominant groups which formed a part of the mainstream political structure. In Tamil Nadu depressed class politics, commonly referred to as Adi Dravida politics, emanated largely from the activities of the articulate sections of the Paraiyar community. The Paraiyar leaders initially started with a shared Dravidian/Tamil identity. But this initiative did not succeed for

The Making of Adi Dravida Politics

Raj Sekhar Basu

long, since the Justice Party and the depressed class leaders had differences over a number of issues. The depressed class leaders deliberately involved themselves in projects aimed at constructing the Adi Dravida identity, which distinguished the depressed classes from the grand social categorisation of non-Brahminism that had been consciously sustained by the upper-caste, non-Brahmin leadership. By the early 1920s, there were clear signs of a break in the Adi Dravida–non-Brahmin alliance. In the following years, the Paraiyar community leaders, the driving force behind Adi Dravida politics in Tamil Nadu, raised a number of social and political issues, including that of representation in public services and elected bodies. However, their internal differences prevented them from laying the foundations of an autonomous brand of politics. In a sense, their involvement with institutional politics was responsible for the differences among them, thereby giving rise to groups and splinter groups within depressed class politics in Madras. Thus, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the depressed class politicians preferred to ally with different streams of politics in accordance with their interests. While some of them favoured the Adi Dravida Self-Respect alliance to strengthen the foundations of a radical anti-casteist movement, there were others who displayed their preference for the Congress Party as well as the Justice Party.

The Beginnings of the Non-Brahmin Movement

The non-Brahmin movement in Madras Presidency owed its origins to certain developments in the early decades of the twentieth century. Though, in the early 1910s, the Madras United League and the Dravidian Association had tried to uphold non-Brahmin interests, the foundation of a strong non-Brahmin political organisation was yet to emerge.⁴ These organisational deficiencies influenced the non-Brahmin leaders to form a powerful organisation that could counter the claims of Brahmins over matters related to political representation and public services. The non-Brahmin leaders, with such objectives in mind, met in a conference on 20 November 1916, at Victoria Public Hall in Madras.

In this conference attended by thirty non-Brahmin leaders, C Natesa Mudaliar, Secretary of the Madras Dravidian Association, brought together two well-known leaders, T M Nair and P Theagaraya Chetti, to form a non-Brahmin political action group. The deliberations led to the formation of the 'South Indian Peoples' Association', whose primary objective was to publish newspapers in English, Tamil and Telugu, highlighting the viewpoints of non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency. The conference also proposed to establish a political association under the banner of the 'South Indian Liberal Federation'.⁵

The South Indian Peoples' Association observed in its manifesto: "The

time has come when an attempt should be made to define the attitude of several non-Brahmin Indian communities in this Presidency towards what is called the Indian Home Rule Movement.”⁶ The manifesto also pointed out that a large proportion of the population in Madras Presidency consisted of non-Brahmins, and that they also happened to be the majority among tax payers. It regretted the fact that non-Brahmins did not, however, play an important role in the realm of politics. It felt that a proper political organisation of non-Brahmins needed to be established, since their political interests differed greatly from those of the Brahmins who had a miniscule presence in the total population of the Presidency.

The majority of the non-Brahmin leaders shared an apprehension that reforms initiated towards self-government would only strengthen the Brahmin dominance over the administration and polity. This influenced them to oppose the nationalist movement, which was inspired by the ideology and political programmes of the Congress. The non-Brahmin leaders thus became more interested in combating the Home Rule movement. A prominent non-Brahmin newspaper observed in December 1916: “We do not want Home Rule for it will bring about the condition of ancient India, when the Sudras were kept suppressed. ... Our goal is the goal of self-government, but we want to be led there by the British.”⁷

Thus, by the end of 1916, the non-Brahmin political identity had assumed an element of distinctiveness. The aversion shared by non-Brahmin leaders of the Brahmin-dominated Congress was the most important factor behind the emergence of this identity. The political machinations of the Congress leadership to keep non-Brahmins away from the membership of elected bodies encouraged non-Brahmin leaders to demand a greater share of political power. Dr T M Nair’s successive defeats in the elections to the Madras Legislative Council and the Imperial Legislative Council vindicated, to a large extent, the apprehensions of a possible “Brahmin Raj”.

It has often been argued that Annie Besant’s Home Rule movement greatly influenced the course of early twentieth century non-Brahmin politics in Madras Presidency. Her repeated emphasis of the brahmanical ideals of ‘*karma*’ and ‘*varna*’ raised suspicion in the minds of non-Brahmins. The majority of the non-Brahmin leaders believed that Annie Besant and her followers were trying to revive the logic of caste to establish the superiority of the Brahmins.⁸ Fear of a rejuvenated ‘Brahmin oligarchy’ caused a great deal of consternation among all sections of non-Brahmins.⁹ The Madras Adi Dravida Jana Sabha, claiming to represent the interests of 6 million ‘untouchables’, opposed the contention of the Home Rule agitators. The middle-class leadership of the Madras Adi Dravida Jana Sabha, comprising mostly traders, teachers and journalists, criticised the Home

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Rule propaganda and requested the government to grant special concessions to the socially despised communities. The Adi Dravida Jana Sabha leaders forcefully stated that efforts by the government in the sphere of education alone could ensure the uplift of the so-called 'untouchable' population. They also favoured communal representation in the local bodies and the legislature.¹⁰

Subsequently, on the eve of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, the non-Brahmin political elites, in their quest to build a broader political constituency, strongly supported the Adi Dravida demands for social equality. Influential non-Brahmin leaders organised several conferences to bring the Adi Dravidas closer to their ideology. They strongly propounded that uplift of the 'untouchables' had to be one of the most important items on the agenda of the non-Brahmin movement. They also exhorted the depressed classes to reject brahmanical injunctions outright and to claim equality of status with other classes of the society. T M Nair, addressing a gathering of the depressed classes at the Spur Tank in Madras, bitterly denounced the Home Rule movement. He expressed the opinion that the movement was a ploy on the part of some influential Brahmins to enforce an oppressive hierarchical social system on the majority of the population. He observed:

Our contention is that until all the members of your community [the Panchamas] and the educated are brought to a condition when you can realise what is going on, realise your responsibility and use your votes in a discriminating manner, the British power must continue to hold the scales ... instead of leaving you to the tender mercies of the so called superior castes in this country ... you must at least have the courage to resist all attempts on the part of the small oligarchy in this country to snatch the powers of Government in their hands.¹¹

Nair also broached the idea of a committee comprising representatives of the non-Brahmin communities and the depressed classes. These moves towards a broader coalition were evolved with a definite objective to convince the colonial bureaucracy of the injustices being faced by the majority.¹² The attempts did yield political dividends for the non-Brahmin leaders. The Adi Dravida Jana Sabha supported the stand taken by the South Indian Liberal Federation on constitutional changes. Subsequently, it too demanded election instead of nomination to the legislature.¹³

Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, the Issue of Responsible Government and Non-Brahmin Politics

On 20 August 1917, the Secretary of State for India announced that the British government, in the future, would implement policies aimed at

increasing Indian participation in the governance of the country. This official stance evoked a series of responses from different non-Brahmin groups in Madras Presidency. The non-Brahmin elites organised conferences to uphold the principle of equality of rights and opportunities for different groups in the society. These conferences prepared the ground for discussion on communal representation of non-Brahmins, on the eve of Montagu's visit to Madras. The non-Brahmin elites drew up an elaborate list of demands to influence the British ruling groups. They also tried to strengthen the rural base of the Justice Party. They emphatically stated that lack of unity among non-Brahmins was the main factor behind their political subordination to the Brahmin-dominated Congress. They launched virulent attacks against institutions drawing sustenance from classical Hinduism. Finally, they reminded the colonial authorities that the purpose of responsible government would not be served unless the non-Brahmins were provided representation on a communal basis.

In December 1917, Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, and Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State, made a visit to Madras. The South Indian Liberal Federation, the mouthpiece of the non-Brahmin political elite, was the first among all political organisations to present a memorandum to the Viceroy in support of its political demands. In this memorandum, the non-Brahmin politicians supported the need for undertaking political reforms but hesitated from demanding full-scale self-government. Dr T M Nair, a founding member of the Justice Party, explained to Montagu the nature of the farce of holding elections, given the power and prestige enjoyed by the Brahmins. Despite such strong assertions, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report rejected the plea for separate non-Brahmin electorates.¹⁴

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report firmly opposed the principle of communal representation on the ground that it would strengthen communal divisions within Indian society, thereby stalling India's advance towards self-government. However, the non-Brahmin political elite felt that by setting aside the opinions of non-Brahmins, the colonial bureaucracy had expressed its ignorance in comprehending the links between caste and politics in Madras Presidency. Interestingly, a section of the bureaucracy in the Presidency also seemed to be in sympathy with the political demands of the non-Brahmins.

While the debate over communal representation of non-Brahmins continued, the Government of India, in 1918, formed a committee under Lord Southborough to examine the issues of separate electorates, constituencies and franchise. Two Indian members were inducted into the committee, both of whom were Brahmins as well as members of the Congress. The decision immediately gave rise to a controversy in the political circles

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of Madras. The non-Brahmins criticised the government for involving Brahmins in vital issues, particularly ones related to their own political demands. The South Indian Liberal Federation hurriedly summoned a session in October 1918 to voice its protest against the official decision to involve Brahmins in vital political issues.¹⁵

In this memorandum, the non-Brahmin elites also strongly argued that neither direct elections nor extension of franchise would be of any real benefit to their communities. They felt that a non-Brahmin electorate would not only ensure the return of a larger number of non-Brahmin legislators, but would also guarantee that only those sincerely interested in the welfare of their communities found a place in the council.¹⁶ A more rigid stand on this issue was taken by the Adi Dravida Jana Sabha, which observed: "We would fight to the last drop of our blood, any attempt to transfer the seat of authority in this country from the British hands to the so called caste Hindus, who have been oppressing us in the past and would do so again but for the British Government."¹⁷

However, the Southborough Franchise Committee expressed the opinion that non-Brahmins would predominate over Brahmins in the ratio of 4:1, on the basis of electoral qualification. The committee felt that non-Brahmins, on the basis of their strength, could secure the election of their own candidates; and that separate electorates for non-Brahmins would practically place Brahmins in a separate communal electorate.¹⁸ The committee recommended that it was totally unreasonable to adopt the principle of communal representation for non-Brahmins.

The Government of India, however, did not endorse the opinions of the Franchise Committee, and opined that at least 50 per cent (30 out of 61) of the general non-Muhammadan seats in the Madras Legislative Council should be reserved for non-Brahmins. The Governor of Madras adopted a more rigid stand on the recommendations of the Southborough Committee. The Madras government, in its correspondence with the Government of India, expressed the opinion that even if the size of the electorate was enlarged, it would not be of much benefit to the Panchama communities, Muhammadans, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians. A section of the colonial bureaucracy felt that such a policy would be unjustified since the non-Brahmin caste Hindus believed that arrangements for territorial electorates would favour the Brahmins.¹⁹ Influential members of the ICS (Indian Civil Service) lobby in Madras opined that the educational superiority of the Brahmins would give them greater advantage at the time of canvassing, while their traditional social and religious pre-eminence as well as their organisational skills would help them to extend their political influence beyond their own class.²⁰

Alexander Cardew, a prominent ICS officer and a member of the

Madras Executive Council, communicated to the Government of India the difficulties of achieving democracy in a caste-ridden society. He highlighted the fact that the place of an individual in Indian society was determined by the merits or demerits of previous birth. He observed:

closely connected with the doctrine that each man's place in the present birth has been determined by his actions in the past existence is the institution of caste which has the effect of stereotyping and fixing unalterably the position of each individual in the social scale. Thus a man born a Brahmin cannot be other than a Brahmin and a man born a Pariah can never be other than a Pariah. Equality of opportunity is impossible under such conditions and it is neither recognized nor desired by Indian public opinion.²¹

Furthermore, it was argued that the policy of neutrality and of impartiality pursued by the British administration in India, for all purposes, had strengthened Brahmin hegemony over the society and polity. In fact reformist colonial bureaucrats insisted that in societies where great disparities prevailed in terms of social prestige and political power, the introduction of modern democratic institutions and practices would prove to be far more oppressive for the socially despised communities.²² These opinions were also echoed in the demands of the non-Brahmin political elite favouring communal representation. The Government of India and the Executive Council of Madras did concede that the ritual superiority of Brahmins would always give them an advantage in any democratic representational scheme. However a final decision on the matter remained to be taken. Finally, in 1919, a Joint Parliamentary Committee was appointed in London to make recommendations regarding future constitutional reforms for India.

In London, the non-Brahmin opinion in favour of communal representation was presented in the form of a memorandum by K V Reddi Naidu.²³ The top echelons of the colonial bureaucracy were convinced by the arguments presented by the non-Brahmin elites in favour of communal representation. Subsequently, the Government of India Act 1919, while reserving seats for non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council, left it to the contending parties to decide on the number of seats to be reserved. The Brahmin-non-Brahmin dialogue on this failed to yield the desired result. The non-Brahmin leaders strongly contended that though they constituted a numerical majority, the overwhelming Brahmin supremacy prevented them from exercising their political rights.²⁴

In the meantime, Lord Willingdon, Governor of Madras, gave his consent for the reservation of 50 per cent of the total seats in the legislature for non-Brahmins. The South Indian Liberal Federation immediately

thereafter lodged a protest against the decision. It rejected the government order, demanding reservation in 75 per cent of the seats. Both the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin lobbies made allegations and counter-allegations against each other of creating confusion over the number of reserved seats. K V Reddi Naidu argued that non-Brahmins would not be able to secure adequate representation as long as Brahmins continued to enjoy undue advantage in matters related to representation.²⁵

While the debate over representation reached a point of acrimony, the hesitation of the colonial bureaucracy in Madras gave rise to many complications. This element of indecision was reflected in the opinions of the Governor, Lord Willingdon. His comments on representation drew the ire of the non-Brahmin political elites. In their mouthpieces, they alleged that the Governor was acting at the behest of the Brahmins.²⁶ In the midst of this furore, the Government of India, at the request of the Madras government, appointed Lord Meston to find a solution. Lord Meston heard the views of a select group of non-Brahmins and Brahmins on matters related to the reservation of seats in the legislature. He rejected the non-Brahmin demand that a limit be placed upon the number of Brahmin candidates who would be returned to the council. The opinions of Brahmin publicists like C P Ramaswami Iyer regarding the reservation of seats for non-Brahmins in each territorial unit were favoured. The allegations of "Brahmana tyranny" made by the non-Brahmin political elites were rejected.²⁷

Lord Meston's judgement, to a great extent, was influenced by some of the election results of 1919 and 1920. In the August 1919 elections to the Madras Legislative Council and in the Madras Corporation elections of 1920, non-Brahmin candidates were elected in large numbers with voters voting across community lines. These trends might have influenced Lord Meston to state that non-Brahmins had been making impressive gains even without enjoying the benefits of any special protection.²⁸

The Meston Award granted twenty-four seats to the non-Brahmins. The announcement was greeted with protest by the non-Brahmin lobby. Leaders holding important portfolios in the Justice Party bitterly opposed the Award. They issued statements exhorting non-Brahmin electorates to vote for only non-Brahmin candidates.²⁹ Lord Meston's observations regarding the efficacy of communal representation provoked the non-Brahmin mouthpieces to adopt a more rigid stand on the issue.³⁰ The non-Brahmin leadership decided to organise protest meetings and adopt resolutions to express their resentment of the Award. Several associations joined the fray and adopted resolutions condemning the Award as a Brahmin-influenced one.³¹

Significantly, the arguments advanced by the non-Brahmin leaders

reflected the peculiarities of the minority problem in Madras Presidency. The non-Brahmin leaders, in order to give strength to their arguments, tried to combine a status of majority and minority – majority by number and minority in terms of political backwardness. Their views on communal representation also led to ill-will between them and the Brahmins. The government tried to broker a compromise by supporting the policy of reserved seats in plural-member constituencies.

The government's stand was somewhat of a half-way house between separate communal electorates, as demanded by the non-Brahmins, and free general constituencies, as demanded by the Brahmins. The Brahmins had every reason to be happy as the principle of communal electorate was not extended to them. On the other hand, the non-Brahmins, despite their disagreements with the colonial bureaucracy, scored a major political victory since statutory recognition was given to their demand for the adoption of special safeguards in matters related to representation.

Justice Party Ministry, Non-Brahminism and the Issue of Panchama Identity

The first election in Madras Presidency under the reforms was held in November 1920. The Justice Party participated in the election with a definite political programme. Its task was made easy by the Congress Party's decision to not field candidates. However several Congress members defied this decision and ran for office, though they were not officially recognized as Party candidates. Some of them who contested as independents were returned to the council. The Justice Party registered a comfortable victory, winning 63 out of the 98 seats.³²

The victory of the Justice Party was more due to the efforts of its leaders to exploit the non-Brahmin sentiments of self-respect. The non-Brahmin elites were successful in conveying the impression that nationalism and freedom from colonial rule could not be regarded as the sole issues of political significance in Madras. They insisted that the social and political implications of the '*varna-jati*' ordering needed to be analysed from an altogether new perspective. Their leaders were successful in building up a distinct non-Brahmin constituency based on cooperation and understanding between upper-caste non-Brahmins and the so-called 'untouchables'. This constituency not only responded to the call of the non-Brahmin political ideology, but also to the pressure of its needs born out of its desire for survival.

In December 1920, A Subbarayalu Reddiar, Ramarayananingar and K V Reddi Naidu assumed their ministerial offices on the suggestion of Governor Willingdon. The choice of non-Brahmin ministers provoked a great deal of reaction from the pro-Brahmin press. Despite such provocations,

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Lord Willingdon preferred to continue with his three non-Brahmin ministers.³³

The Governor urged the non-Brahmin representatives to present themselves as a single political entity during the deliberations in the Madras Legislative Council. Such efforts aimed at unifying the diverse non-Brahmin communities received a far greater impetus from the decisions taken by the Raja of Panagal, in his capacity as Minister for Local Self-Government. He made full use of his official powers to make nominations to the local boards, and distributed largesse in the form of lucrative licenses and government contracts among his supporters.³⁴

In a bid to retain political power, the Justice Party, under the influence of the consensualists, secured the passage of the Hindu Religious Endowments Act during its first term in office. The Ministry also supported the Civil Marriages Bill introduced in the Legislative Council to legalise inter-caste and other forms of marriages not recognised by traditional customs. At the same time, the Ministry issued the 'Communal Government Order' to secure communal representation for all the communities in public services.³⁵ It also recognised the nomenclatures chosen by the so-called 'untouchable' communities and 'backward classes', whose previous nomenclatures had definite pejorative connotations.³⁶

However, the partial lack of political will on the part of the non-Brahmin leaders impeded the aims and objectives of the Justice Party Ministry. The consensualists did not favour implementation of radical measures. The Ministry's policies relating to elementary education, development of public facilities and representation of 'untouchables' in local bodies could not fulfil the expectations of the 'depressed classes' or so-called 'untouchables', who constituted an important section of the non-Brahmin population in the Presidency. The elite non-Brahmin leadership of the Justice Party failed to comprehend their demands and this resulted in failure to build up a non-Brahmin solidarity.³⁷

Depressed class leaders like M C Rajah frequently complained that the interests of the 'untouchable' communities were not being served by the public bodies. He argued that in most cases the presidents of the Local Boards were caste Hindus and that they generally ignored the demands of the 'untouchable' communities. In fact much of this criticism was valid, for the consensualists within the Justice Party did not favour radical changes through government initiatives. They felt that local institutions as formulators of local policy and moulders of public opinion could serve as catalysts for social change. They believed that any reform intending to eliminate caste distinctions and to integrate the so-called 'untouchables' into the local community would have to emanate from local groups through a process of consensus.

In the early 1920s, the Justice Party leaders, drawn mostly from the upper castes, failed to bridge the gaps between different non-Brahmin communities having varying interests. The strong casteist bias of the influential non-Brahmin leaders led to a decline in the Justice Party's electoral fortunes.³⁸ The discontent of the communities categorised as 'depressed' or as 'untouchables' with the Justice Party's policies brought about the split in the non-Brahmin coalition. Subsequently, there was a realisation among the socially and economically discriminated non-Brahmin communities that the call for a homogenous non-Brahmin bloc would not be of much benefit to them.³⁹

The Politics of Identity

The leaders of the Paraiyar community, representing the largest and most articulate group among the socially ostracised communities, had popularised the Adi Dravida identity across the entire 'depressed class' or 'Pan-chama' population in Tamil Nadu, towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ The emergence of the Justice Party in the late 1910s gave a fresh impetus to this identity, but the unresponsive attitude of some of the influential non-Brahmin leaders sometimes gave rise to caste tensions. The consensualists, led by the Raja of Panagal, did not show much interest in mitigating the grievances of the 'untouchable' communities. Their insensitivity meant that the 'untouchables' were denied the opportunity of exercising their influence over the decision-making process, particularly in the local bodies. In such a situation, some of 'untouchables' expressed their distrust of the Justice Party's slogan for a homogenous non-Brahmin bloc.⁴¹

Thus the task of building a non-Brahmin-Adi Dravida coalition proved to be a difficult one for the Justice Party leadership. Non-Brahmin leaders like T M Nair faced a great deal of difficulty in mobilising the Adi Dravidas for a broader non-Brahmin bloc.⁴² In fact several Adi Dravida leaders expressed the opinion that neither the 'Brahmin sponsored Home Rule' nor the 'non-Brahmin sponsored Home Rule' would bring about changes in the condition of the communities who for centuries had been regarded as 'untouchables'.⁴³ Notwithstanding such differences of opinion, the majority of the Adi Dravidas, who owed allegiance to the Madras Adi Dravida Janasabha, responded favourably to the Justice Party's ideological and political overtures. At the same time, the Adi Dravidas made it clear that they did not favour the merger of their political identity with the broader political mainstream, as represented by the Congress and the Justice Party. In October 1917, the Adi Dravidas requested the Justice Party to support social reform and treat them as their own brethren.⁴⁴ The Adi Dravida leaders also reminded the non-Brahmin Congress leaders of

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the Madras Presidency Association (MPA) that they needed to accord them equality in terms of prestige and social status. The MPA leaders did not show much interest in accepting these demands and their differences with the Adi Dravidas remained irreconcilable.⁴⁵

By 1918, rifts also surfaced between the Adi Dravidas and the Justice Party. Adi Dravida leaders owing allegiance to the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, despite being critical of the Home Rule movement, sought to maintain a distance from the Justice Party. The efforts on the part of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha to raise the demand of separate electorates reflected its eagerness to maintain a distinct political identity, rather than a composite non-Brahmin identity.⁴⁶

Thus it became fairly evident that the Adi Dravidas preferred a measure of political autonomy, and their choice of the appellation 'Adi Dravida' rather than 'Dravida' reflected the desire for a distinct political and social identity. Though they had an understanding with the Justice Party, the leaders of the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha pointed out that their interests were not always the same as that of the other non-Brahmin communities. They preferred a more complex politics of identity. M C Rajah and other like-minded Adi Dravida leaders felt that there was a need to reconstruct the 'Panchama history' in order to preserve the distinct identity of the 'untouchable' communities within the vortex of non-Brahminism.⁴⁷

Historicising the Past: Reinvigorating the Panchama Identity

By the late 1910s, the new historical exercise aimed at rediscovering the 'Panchama' past, generated powerful critiques of both Brahminism and non-Brahminism. The Paraiyar community leaders not only attacked brahmanical notions of hierarchy and purity, but also exposed the subordination of the 'Adi Dravidas' at the hands of upper-caste non-Brahmins. The *Adi Dravidan*, launched in early 1920, expressed the economic and social demands of the Adi Dravidas. It published a series of articles that sought to raise a new debate over the meaning of the term 'Sudra'.

In an article published in April 1920 entitled, 'Are We Sudras?', the unnamed 'Adi Dravida' author tried to establish the opinion that the term 'Sudra' had been mostly used to denote those races which had been vanquished by Aryan invaders from the north. It was argued that this term could not be applied to the Tamil people since they had never tasted defeat in the hands of the Aryans. There were attempts to establish that the Adi Dravidas were the original inhabitants of south India, who had enjoyed a superior social status in the past because of their close connections with the Tamil ruling groups.⁴⁸

The Adi Dravida leaders also tried to inculcate religious virtues among

the 'untouchable' communities. The spiritual attainments of saintly personalities like Tiruvalluvar and Nandanar were frequently published in the pages of the *Adi Dravidan* to vindicate the claim that social superiority did not depend on birth, but was determined by the qualities and actions of individuals.⁴⁹ Adi Dravida intellectuals rejected the brahmanical logic of an Aryan invasion of south India. The intellectual premise of this thesis was based on the argument that the pre-Aryan Dravidian civilisation was culturally superior to the nomadic civilisation of the Aryans.⁵⁰

Subsequently, the Adi Dravida intellectuals also tried to link incidents of rural violence to the institution of caste. Growing incidents of caste violence in the southern Tamil-speaking districts led to angry outbursts from the Adi Dravida leaders. They strongly criticised the Justice Ministry's failure to quell these disturbances in the rural areas.⁵¹ These incidents also gave rise to debates among the Adi Dravida reformers and community leaders. While reformists like Swami Sahajanandam stressed cleanliness and moral virtues, others like Swami Advaidananda argued that "reform of Hinduism", as advocated by Gandhi, would not be of much benefit to their community.⁵² These debates also acquired a distinct political overtone with the 'Adi Dravida' leaders unanimously stating that no real purpose could be served by joining either the Congress or the Justice Party. The concept of a homogenous non-Brahmin bloc as propounded by the Justice Party leadership came in for sharp criticism by the Adi Dravida leaders, who felt that a wide gulf separated the non-Brahmin upper castes from the 'untouchables'.⁵³

Thus, a section of the Adi Dravida leaders and intellectuals made use of 'caste' journals to establish their distinct socio-political identity. The debates revolving around the Panchama past as well as the socio-economic conditions of the 'untouchable' communities convinced them that their uplift could only be attained through formation of their own caste associations. There was an expectation that the formation of such caste associations would provide the Adi Dravidas with an opportunity to gain preferential treatment from the government.⁵⁴

The politics of identity centered on and following the rediscovery of the Panchama past generated a lot of controversy in political circles. The government's decision to induct M C Rajah in the Madras Legislative Council under the provisions of the Montford reforms sparked protest from the Home Rule Leaguers. They criticised the government's decision to nominate a person who was an "avowed Brahmin hater".⁵⁵ They proposed the name of V G Vasudeva Pillay, a Congressman, instead of M C Rajah, as the representative of the depressed classes in the Madras Legislative Council. The Brahmin-dominated Congress tried to engineer a conflict between the two rival groups of the depressed classes to scuttle moves

towards the projection of a distinct Adi Dravida identity. The Congress leaders sought to establish that not all sections of the depressed classes favoured a distinct identity as expressed through the usage of terms such as "Authee Dravidas".⁵⁶

Significantly, these controversies centering around appellations caused splits among the depressed class leadership. Depressed class leaders opposed to M C Rajah felt that attempts to establish an exclusive "Authee Dravida" identity represented the opinions of only a section of the 'untouchable' communities.⁵⁷ They argued that such efforts could win only special privileges for them, but would not place them on an equal footing with caste Hindus. In an article published in *New India*, a depressed class author stated that Rajah's attempt to foist an Adi Dravida identity on all the 'untouchable' communities would denigrate them further in the eyes of the colonial bureaucracy.⁵⁸

In the early 1920s, the issue of the Adi Dravida identity proved to be of immense political significance. Adi Dravidas who enjoyed proximity to the Congress felt that nomenclature such as "Authee Dravida", representing an inclination for a distinct brand of politics, was unacceptable as it was overtly communal. On the other hand, the non-Brahmin political elite expressed the opinion that though the Adi Dravidas were attempting to project a distinct political identity, the non-Brahmin-Adi Dravida political coalition needed to be given a proper shape through the creation of a monolithic non-Brahmin bloc.⁵⁹

For Rajah and others having close connections with the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, the preservation of a distinct identity seemed to be the most important route to political success. Rajah felt that the 'Panchamas' would fail to win special concessions and adequate representation in elected bodies if their distinctive identity was not maintained. At the same time, he pointed out that despite differences between them, temporary alliances with non-Brahmins could be worked out to stall the all-pervasive Brahmin supremacy and for gaining rightful political status.

By the early 1920s, as the Adi Dravida identity gained predominance, the conflict with the non-Brahmins became more and more pronounced. In most cases, the alienation of the Justice Party was a result of the reluctance of upper-caste non-Brahmins to accord a position of honour and pride to the depressed classes. Their domineering attitude made the prospects of a historic non-Brahmin bloc appear bleak.

Caste and Class: The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills Strike and the Fracture in the Non-Brahmin Polity

The formation of the Madras Labour Union in April 1918 was a significant step forward in the history of the labour movement in south India.⁶⁰ By

1920, the Madras government, in its correspondences with the Government of India, was pointing to increasing instances of conflict between management and labour. In the early part of the same year, a strike took place in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras city. Fearing a wave of sympathetic strikes, the government promptly appointed a Board of Arbitration. The mills' management, however, was not willing to concede to the labour demands, and the Governor of Madras tried to persuade the employees to resume work. The government's efforts met with little success. On 21 October 1920, the labourers of the Buckingham Mills struck work; and when the management refused to grant concessions, the protests increased. On 9 December, the government ordered the police to shoot striking workers who were indulging in violence. The government justified the police action in terms of self-defence against violence incited by the workers.⁶¹

The following year witnessed more strikes and lockouts in the mills. The management refused to recognize the unions formed by their employees and engaged labourers from outside.⁶² The strike, which gave rise to a major conflict, began on 20 May 1921. Workers in the spinning department struck work because the management refused to discuss their wage demands. Subsequently, fearing trouble, the management decided to close the mills. But trade union members were divided over the issue of the strike.⁶³ This division coincided with the caste loyalties of upper-caste Hindus and the Adi Dravidas.

The decision of the Adi Dravidas to abstain from the strike met with a strong criticism from the nationalist press in Madras. The nationalist press interpreted this as a conspiracy that had been hatched by the Binny management in collusion with government officials and Adi Dravida politicians.⁶⁴ However, the decision to abstain on the part of the Adi Dravidas was largely dictated by their own economic interests. Bereft of tactical mobility as enjoyed by the caste Hindus, the Adi Dravidas found that their economic resources were rapidly dwindling because of recurrent strikes. The predicament of the Adi Dravida workers was perhaps best explained in the statements made by M. C. Rajah, the depressed class member of the Madras Legislative Council. Rajah observed:

In my presence the Adi Dravida labourers unanimously decided that they could not join the strike. ... And they in a body wrote a letter to the President of the Labour Union stating that they were extremely poor, that they had no means of livelihood except working in the Mills and they could not join the strike since they had suffered considerably during the last strike, when even the little property they had, had to be placed in the hands of the Marwaris [moneylenders].⁶⁵

The majority of the Adi Dravida labourers defied both the management and the workers' union. In fact most of them believed that Binnys did not discriminate against them as much as the Indian mill owners did. At the same time, they felt that British rule had given them greater opportunities to rise from their lowly economic position. The links between the caste Hindu-dominated union and the nationalist leadership also strengthened the fears and suspicion of the Adi Dravidas. They had little interest in the anti-British agitation and resented being forced to take part in political meetings and demonstrations organised by the Congress.⁶⁶ By June 1921, it was clear that economic factors as well as differences along caste lines would disrupt the united struggle of the workers against the foreign management of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.⁶⁷

The Adi Dravidas initially faced difficulties in defying the instructions of the union. Being a community long accustomed to traditions of subservience and oppression, they found it difficult to pursue an independent line of action. Nonetheless their procrastination gave way once a sizeable number of workers from their community, unable to bear the economic distress, broke away from the rest of the labour force. Subsequently, the Adi Dravidas living in *cheris* and sharing a strong sense of community started acting as a group. Soon, the battle between the strikers and the strike-breakers assumed serious proportions. In this battle the caste Hindus allied with the Muslims, while the Adi Dravidas were in alliance with the Indian Christians.⁶⁸

The cooperation between the Adi Dravidas and the mill management aroused jealousy among the upper-caste striking mill-hands. Towards the end of the June 1921, Adi Dravida leaders like M C Rajah made allegations that mill-hands owing allegiance to the union had been intimidating the Adi Dravidas to prevent them from joining the mill as workers. Fearing violent reprisals from the union, the Adi Dravidas started marching in groups from their *cheris*, armed with crude weapons, to their places of work.

The conflict escalated on 28 June 1921, when a mob attacked the Puliyanthope *cheri* with stones and bottles. At night the same day, a mob set fire to nearly a hundred huts belonging to the Adi Dravidas, and went on a rampage shouting slogans like "*Gandhi ki Jai!*"⁶⁹ Soon after, the government, realizing the gravity of the situation, decided to evacuate the affected Adi Dravida families from the *cheris*.⁷⁰ Despite such preventive measures, the clashes between the Adi Dravidas and the Muslims took an ugly form. This violence had little direct connection to the labour dispute. The Adi Dravida-Muslim confrontation was a direct fall-out of the tensions that had been brewing between the two communities over other issues.⁷¹

The trade union leaders strongly condemned the attacks on the Adi

Dravida workers and interpreted such incidents as the handiwork of a few hooligans. The government, however, refused to accept the assurances provided by the union leaders. Lord Willingdon, the Governor, summoned the trade union leaders and warned them that they would be personally held responsible for any such untoward incident in the future. The government also made it clear to them that it was in favour of the return of normalcy in the working of the mills and the acceptance of conditions as laid down by the Binny management.⁷² The government took the responsibility of evacuating and housing the homeless Adi Dravidas in government camps at Vyasarpadi, a suburb of Madras.⁷³

The anti-labour policies of the mill management further embittered the relations between the government and trade union leaders. The leaders, most of whom were nationalists, felt that the working class movement needed to be more closely integrated with the political programmes of the Congress. However, ordinary members of the union favoured a compromise with the management, which enjoyed the patronage and support of the colonial bureaucracy. However, efforts to broach a compromise between the union and the management did not fully succeed. The communal strife in the city also posed a challenge.⁷⁴

In the midst of this uneasy calm, Gandhi made a visit to Madras in September 1921. Gandhi's visit proved to be ineffective, since he could neither win back jobs for the workers nor extract assurances of financial support from the management. His speech in favour of non-violence and the adoption of a conciliatory approach towards the Adi Dravidas also went unheeded. The conflict between the Adi Dravidas and caste Hindus continued, with the government frequently resorting to police firing.⁷⁵ On 21 October 1921, the striking workers finally surrendered. In a general body meeting addressed by a prominent anti-Congress politician, the workers were exhorted to return to work unconditionally. The mills started functioning and the Adi Dravidas were clearly the gainers.⁷⁶

The end of the mill strikes witnessed a tussle between political parties in Madras. They accused each other as well as the government of deliberately mishandling the issue. The nationalists criticised the colonial government for engineering splits within the labour movement. They argued that it was in defence of British commercial interests that the bureaucracy had adopted a repressive attitude towards labour. The nationalists' version of the strikes was controverted by both the government and the Justice Party. The Justice Party was critical of both the Congress and government involvement in the labour disputes. Justice Party leaders blamed the politics of non-cooperation for producing a violent labour unrest. They believed that the government's pronounced partiality towards the Adi Dra-

vidas, especially in the aftermath of the Puliyanthope riots, was a deliberate attempt to break the non-Brahmin solidarity.⁷⁷

While differences of opinion continued to prevail between the Congress and the Justice Party, the Indian press stepped up its demand for an impartial enquiry into the government's high-handedness against unarmed striking workers. In view of such repeated pleas, the government decided to appoint a three-member committee, headed by Sir William Ayling. The two other members of the committee were a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin, both known for their moderate views.⁷⁸

The appointment of the enquiry committee did not meet with much favour from the general public. In fact there was a widespread feeling that it would not discharge its responsibilities impartially. Thus it was in the midst of public apathy that the Ayling Committee began its fact-finding mission. Prominent non-Brahmin leaders like Theagaraya Chetti, O Thanikachalam Chetti and V Shanmughan Mudaliar also visited the riot-torn Adi Dravida *cheris*. They submitted a memorandum to the government based on their own observations. They argued that the government's decision to segregate the Adi Dravidas from the caste Hindus and the Muslims was the most important factor behind the spread of violence. They also expressed the opinion that the "Authee Dravidas" were far more restive than any other community. Subsequently, it was also stated that the Adi Dravidas had inflicted injuries on their own bodies to draw the government's attention and benevolence.⁷⁹

The Justice memorandum made several interesting recommendations. It demanded that free feeding of Adi Dravidas in the government camps should be stopped, and a proclamation be issued that offenders of all castes shall be punished. The memorandum also demanded that erring officials like the Assistant Commissioner of Labour and Inspector Hankinson, responsible for police atrocities on innocent citizens, be transferred. It further demanded the reinstatement of a large number of workers who had been dismissed during the strikes.⁸⁰

The Ayling Committee's report blamed the striking workers for the senseless violence and loss of human lives. It supported the government's view that the Adi Dravidas had been the worst victims of this violence.⁸¹ However, the findings of the committee fell far short of public expectations. The public disenchantment with the Ayling Committee report affected the course of deliberations in the Madras Legislative Council. Non-Brahmin representatives of the Justice Party were successful in forcing a debate on the issue. Leaders like O Thanikachalam Chetti criticised the government for its laxity in mitigating the problems faced by the 'untouchable' communities. Several other non-Brahmin leaders expres-

sed the opinion that both the strikers and the non-strikers should have been accorded equal protection.⁸²

In the course of these deliberations, the Adi Dravidas constantly critiqued the Congress's attempts to brand them as 'appendages' of the government. M C Rajah argued that though the Congress and Justice leaders blamed the Adi Dravidas for the violence, the government records clearly showed that the 'untouchables' had been the worst victims of violence and insult.⁸³ In the midst of such allegations and counter-allegations, the Home Member, Sir Lionel Davidson, expressed the opinion that as caste Hindus had launched attacks on the Adi Dravidas, the police had been left with no option but to intervene. He refuted the allegation that the violence had erupted out of a labour dispute, upholding the view that it was triggered by "a faction inflamed by caste prejudice".⁸⁴ It was also pointed out that far from being blatantly partial, the government had been neutral all through in its handling of the riots.⁸⁵

But the government's version of the Puliyanthope incidents failed to pacify the Congress. V K Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, who was closely connected with the Madras Labour Union, argued that the Congress's stance of non-cooperation had never been a catalyst to violence. He alleged that the government's machinations to divide the workers along caste lines had resulted in disturbances.⁸⁶ This opinion was not shared by Annie Besant and her followers. Besant criticized the non-cooperators in the provincial Congress for their refusal to testify before the Ayling Committee.

Annie Besant was stronger, though, in her criticism of the Justice Party leaders. She argued that the disturbances would not have occurred had the Adi Dravidas not emulated the Justicites in imbibing the politics of hate. She expressed the opinion that the Adi Dravida urge to project a distinct identity had also been responsible for violence along caste lines. The Justice Ministry was also criticised for conniving with the executive regarding the deployment of armed police in the Puliyanthope *cheri*. The Justice Party legislators and ministers, it was alleged, had been a part of the official conspiracy to cause a split in the working class movement.⁸⁷

The consensualists within the Justice Party refuted the allegations made against them by the Congress leadership. Represented by the Raja of Panagal, Theagoraya Chetti and O Thanikachalam Chetti, they expressed the view that the actions of the Labour Commissioner had alienated the 'untouchables' from the other non-Brahmin communities. They argued that an influential section of the colonial bureaucracy, by displaying overt sympathies for the Adi Dravidas, had tried to wreck the homogenous non-Brahmin bloc in south India.⁸⁸ Adi Dravida leaders like M C Rajah were also criticised for openly supporting the partisan attitude of the Labour Department.⁸⁹

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In fact, it was the Justice Party that was most affected by the incidents at Puliyanthope. The Justice leaders tried to cover up the growing differences between the non-Brahmins and the Adi Dravidas by highlighting the disruptive features of the Non-Cooperation movement in Madras. The non-Brahmin elites strongly argued that the Congress had deliberately adopted such a political line to prevent the Justice Party from fulfilling its agenda of good governance. They also expressed the opinion that the non-Brahmin caste Hindu workers were innocent victims of the political sins committed by the Congress. But, while the Justices tried to espouse the interests of the non-Brahmin classes, they made hardly any attempt to comprehend the complex interplay of class and caste factors behind the labour strikes. Failure to recognise the implications of these factors led the non-Brahmins to indulge in strong criticism of the Adi Dravidas.

Significantly, with the ideology of non-Brahminism gradually losing its political sway, differences with the Adi Dravidas acquired sharper overtones. The Adi Dravida leader M C Rajah launched an attack on the Justice Party's style of political functioning. The *Adi Dravidan* published a series of editorials condemning the pronounced upper-caste bias of the Justice Party. One such editorial stated that all the talk of a non-Brahmin brotherhood was nothing but a ploy aimed at misleading the Adi Dravidas. There was an emphatic assertion that instead of being a part of the non-Brahmin fraternity, the Adi Dravidas should develop programmes for their own social and political elevation.⁹⁰ The non-Brahmin elites were also criticised for advocating abolition of the post of Commissioner of Labour. The *Adi Dravidan* stated that the Commissioner of Labour as well as his subordinates had done a commendable job in protecting the lives of innocent Adi Dravida workers.⁹¹

By mid-1922, the relations between the non-Brahmin elites and the Adi Dravidas were at their lowest ebb. M C Rajah blamed the Justice Party leaders for betraying the trust that had been reposed upon them by the Adi Dravidas in Madras. He asserted that the casteist bias of the Justice leadership had led to oppression of the Adi Dravidas. His ire was mainly directed against some of the remarks made by O Thanikachalam Chetti, during a speech at the Adi Dravida Conference in Palayamkottai.⁹² Reacting to Chetti's comments regarding abolition of the Department of Commissioner of Labour, Rajah emphatically stated that the non-Brahmin elites were trying to influence the government to revise its policies towards the Adi Dravidas. He also argued that non-Brahmin leaders were out to spoil the good work initiated by Dr T M Nair for the establishment of a broad, non-Brahmin political coalition.

Rajah argued that even as the non-Brahmins and Brahmins vied with one another to secure the support of the Adi Dravidas, the 'untouchable'

population rarely benefited in terms of representation. The real beneficiaries had been the non-Brahmin caste Hindus. He also criticised the attitude of the Justice Party leadership towards the unfortunate incidents at Puliyanthope. Rajah and his supporters were peeved by the Justice Party's decision not to tender any apology for the role it played during the riots. Subsequently, it was argued that the Justice Party leadership had been overtaken by casteist bias and had extended support to the non-cooperating Hindu workers, though the Adi Dravidas had defied it. This casteist bias, it was believed, was manifested in the demands of the Justice Party leadership to abolish the Department of Commissioner of Labour which had been seriously engaged in socio-economic amelioration of the 'untouchable' communities.⁹³

The antipathy of the Adi Dravidas towards the Justice Party found expression in several other issues. M C Rajah criticised the Elementary Education Act passed by the Madras government on the ground that it did not include any idea of social reform. He put forth the argument that though the Justicites professed that they wanted the Adi Dravidas to take advantage of the Act, they were not in favour of the 'untouchables' giving up their old vocations or professions.⁹⁴

The suggestion of the non-Brahmin elite that the Department of the Commissioner of Labour needed to be closed down in order to secure larger funds for Adi Dravida welfare was also strongly criticised. Rajah stated that such suggestions were part of a larger conspiracy to prevent the Adi Dravidas from gaining economic and social status. Several other depressed class leaders also accused the Justice Party of practising a form of "political blackmail" against the 'untouchable' communities.⁹⁵

In a conference held at Chingleput, Adi Dravida leaders expressed the opinion that in view of the attitude of the Justice Party leaders, the 'untouchable' communities needed to think of new means for social and political elevation, based on self-respect. However, some among them refused to wholly condemn the Justice Party. Adi Dravida leaders like Madurai Pillai accused M C Rajah of exploiting the Puliyanthope incidents to further his own political interests. On the other hand, some 'dissenting' Justicites supported the allegations made by M C Rajah. O Kandaswamy Chetti opined that after its resounding success, the Justice Party leadership had done little to preserve the ideological content of the non-Brahmin movement. The Justice Party thus stood on the threshold of a horizontal divide – with O Kandaswamy Chetti, J S Kanappar and J N Ramanathan on one side, and O Thanikachalam Chetti and Raja of Panagal on the other.⁹⁶

This debate in the aftermath of the Puliyanthope incidents revealed beyond all doubt that years of discrimination at the hands of upper-caste

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non-Brahmins had forced the 'untouchables' to side with the British. The Justice Party, despite its slogan of a homogenous non-Brahmin bloc, did not make much effort to bridge the disparities between the 'untouchables' and other non-Brahmin communities. Indu Rajagopal has pointed out that the absence of a dialogue between the members and the leaders, and between the district units and the party headquarters in Madras, made decision-making in the Justice Party too simplistic an affair.⁹⁷ The consensualists, in the early stages of the non-Brahmin movement, believed that it would not always be possible to satisfy the aspirations of the different non-Brahmin communities. Therefore only those interests that matched with their ideology needed to be given importance. This elitist bias led them to adopt a rigid stand towards the Adi Dravidas both during and after the Puliyanthope riots. Undoubtedly, such an obdurate attitude stifled all chances of a political compromise with the Adi Dravidas.

The Age of Depressed Class Conferences

By the early 1920s, the depressed classes (mostly including the 'untouchable' communities) displayed a great deal of interest in organising conferences for promoting cooperation amongst them. In 1921, the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha organised a gathering of the depressed classes to protest against a resolution supporting the change of caste appellations like "Pariah" and "Panchama" into Adi Dravidas. Depressed class leaders like V G Vasudeva Pillai, P Venkatachalam and S Somu Pillai opposed the move on the ground that the opinions of various depressed class organisations needed to be ascertained before taking such a decision. It was felt that such unilateral efforts on the part of a section of the non-Brahmin elite would generate more communal discord rather than solidarity.

In fact, there was an opinion that the term 'Adi Dravida' would lead to controversy, for it proposed to integrate the depressed classes with the aboriginal tribes and other socially depressed communities. It was felt the term 'Dravida' was better suited for expressing the distinct identity of the depressed classes.⁹⁸

The hue and cry over the abrupt moves related to the change of caste appellations brought the issue of depressed class identity to the forefront. The depressed class leaders increasingly favoured a different brand of politics, distinct from the politics of non-Brahminism. The conflict between the non-Brahmins and the 'untouchable' communities over the issue of nomenclature coincided with the efforts to organise depressed class conferences. These conferences were mostly organised in the remote and interior parts of South Arcot and Tanjore districts. At some of them, enlightened Brahmin social reformers like Justice T Sadasiva Iyer suggested that terms such as 'Thirukulathar' and 'Nandanarkulathar' could be

adopted as substitutes for pejorative terms such as 'Pariah' and 'Pan-chama'. The government, however, adopted the term Adi Dravida to designate the 'untouchable' communities in Madras Presidency.⁹⁹

The Adi Dravidas utilised these conferences to vent their grievances. The government was requested to enact special labour legislations for the benefit of the agricultural labourers. Resolutions were also adopted requesting the colonial administration to initiate legislations for eliminating social segregation. Adi Dravida leaders like Swami Sahajananda, known for their reformist zeal, utilised the conferences to popularize cleanliness, sanitation and religious devotion among the 'untouchable' communities. They also pleaded for temple entry rights for members of their community.¹⁰⁰

Search for a New Identity: The Adi Dravidas in the Early 1920s

The Adi Dravida inclination to preserve a distinct socio-political identity often found expression through social movements seeking to repudiate the logic of the hierarchical Hindu social order. In June 1921, the Adi Dravidas under the leadership of a reformist leader, Jagannatha Swami, became involved in a mass movement. From the very beginning, this movement directed its attack against the oppression practised by upper-caste landlords on agricultural labourers, belonging mostly to the 'untouchable' communities. The followers of Jagannatha Swami distributed pamphlets among the servile agricultural labourers instructing them to discontinue the practice of prostrating before upper-caste landlords. The Swami also instructed his followers to lead a respectable life and abstain from the use of alcohol and other intoxicants. These instructions often gave rise to conflicts between the agricultural labourers and the upper-caste landlords. In the Kurumballur taluk of Trichinopoly, the conflict assumed the form of riots, and Adi Dravida settlements were subjected to senseless acts of mayhem and destruction. In most cases, the upper-caste landlords retaliated by issuing threats of social boycott, evictions and cancellation of employment contracts.¹⁰¹

The Collector of Trichinopoly intervened to prevent the deterioration of law and order. He assigned lands for both habitation and cultivation purposes to the Adi Dravida families to ameliorate their economic and social status. Despite such official actions, the movement spearheaded by the Paraiyars continued. Though the 'Pallars' and 'Chucklers' withdrew from the movement, the Paraiyars seemed to be in no mood for reconciliation with the caste Hindu landlords. Their resilience was a result partly of the belief that by opposing unjust social practices, they were upholding the egalitarian traditions of the British Raj in India.¹⁰²

Subsequently, the involvement of Adi Dravida leaders like M C Rajah

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strengthened the movement. In a short period of time, the movement spread to the neighbouring South Arcot and Salem districts. Although it failed to hold its popularity for long, it remained a significant episode in the realm of social protest since it inculcated the vision of an egalitarian social order among the 'untouchables'. The wide popularity of this movement indirectly forced the government to pay attention to the emerging Adi Dravida consciousness in Madras Presidency.

The growing Adi Dravida consciousness found expression in the depressed class conferences organised throughout Tamilnadu. At these conferences, the Adi Dravida leaders expressed the opinion that representation in local bodies on the basis of their numerical strength would put an end to social discrimination. The insignificant presence of 'untouchable' communities in the local bodies had led to an indifferent attitude on the part of the upper castes. M C Rajah argued that the government's policy of generally nominating members not belonging to the 'untouchable' communities had not been of any real benefit to the Adi Dravidas. In other words, it was felt that such a policy deprived the Adi Dravidas of the benefits of real representation.¹⁰³

The depressed class conferences also paved the way for political tussles between the Adi Dravidas and the Justice Party. In 1923, M C Rajah, leading a deputation of Adi Dravidas, presented a memorandum to Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Madras. The memorandum highlighted the injustices committed by the Justice Party regarding the representation of Adi Dravidas in elected bodies and public services. It also stated that despite public pronouncements of the ideals of the non-Brahmin movement, the Justice Party leaders tried to keep the Adi Dravidas under their control. It was argued that the Adi Dravidas, as descendants of the original Dravidian races of south India, looked upon the British Raj as a providential blessing. They felt that the British rule had provided them with an opportunity to be familiar with institutions of self-government.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The narrative on the emergence of depressed class politics in early twentieth century Madras Presidency brings several issues to the forefront. The depressed class leadership was critical of both elitist non-Brahmin politics and of the proponents of Vedic Brahminism who argued that it was the basis of unity and Indian nationalism. The elite leadership of the Justice Party and the Brahmin-dominated Congress too often ignored the humanitarian and egalitarian traditions represented by diverse religious streams. The defence of nationalism by both Brahmin and non-Brahmin elites enabled the traditionally dominant castes to project their own selfish ideas, be they in the form of non-Brahminism or the Congress brand of

nationalism. The emergence of depressed class consciousness and depressed class politics incorporated the traditions of resistance, equality and dignity. Subsequently, the depressed class politicians became more interested in doing away with caste and other forms of social divisions, and sought to restore confidence and dignity amongst the oppressed populace. Indeed there were also attempts to establish a new order based on a composite non-Brahmanical tradition, which accommodated and integrated the interest of the Sudras and those of the 'antajas' or depressed sections. This vision of a single, monolithic non-Brahminism was not endorsed by the Justice Party politicians, who belonged to the elite strata of Hindu castes. However, despite their opposition, the depressed class leadership engaged themselves in an exercise through which they tried to understand the past in terms of the present and vice-versa. Their perceptions of history were shaped by their contemporary social and political experiences. This became part of a bigger project of inventing and re-inventing the past. In other words, it was through their own construction of history/the past that the depressed classes strengthened their claims to an appropriate share in the power structure of the colonial state and society. The past represented the living experiences of these communities, their comprehension based on their own reality, and all this was integrated to forge an element of connectivity with their own selves which later found expression in terms of a community. Such exercises connected with the writing of Adi histories enabled the depressed class leadership in south India, like in other parts of the subcontinent, to develop critiques of the relationship between oppressor and the oppressed, between a citizenry who had long been depicted as marginalised and the homogenous nation-state projected by elite nationalists. Lastly, it was through their political conflicts with the dominant non-Brahmin caste groups and through their own narratives of the past, that the depressed classes were able to project their own identity that was different from both the Brahmins and the upper caste Hindus. Indeed, all these provided them with a framework to claim an appropriate share in the power structure of the colonial state.

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Notes

1. Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, 'The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period', *Economic and Political Weekly* (hereafter EPW), Vol. 14, Nos. 7-8, Annual Number on 'Class and Caste in India', February 1979, p. 415.

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 415–16.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
4. In the early years of the twentieth century, some clerks belonging to the Revenue Board Office in Madras started the Madras United League. The induction of Dr C Natesa Mudaliar as Secretary of the League led to the induction of some non-Brahmins as members. By 1914, it was renamed the Dravidian Association, which tried to involve itself mostly with student interests. Its fund-collecting drives and periodical meetings could attract only a small group of urban and rural non-Brahmin elites. See Indu Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, pp. 34–35. See also, S G Manavala Ramanujam, 'The Origin of the Justice Party', *Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Madras, 1968, pp. 89–90; and P Rangaswami Naidu, 'The Origin of the Justice Party', *ibid.*, pp. 259–60.
5. *The Hindu*, 20 December 1916.
6. T Varadarajalu Naidu, *The Justice Movement, 1917* (A detailed account of the activities of the Justice Movement in the First year of its existence), Dravida Kazhagam, Madras, 1991, p. 1.
7. *Non-Brahmin*, 3 December 1916, cited in S Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 69.
8. Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 19.
9. The *Common Weal* expressed some views which obviously led to a considerable degree of resentment among non-Brahmins. It observed that "the word 'non-Brahmana' itself is unnatural and not very complementary to those who seem to take glory in it. Although there is not much in a name, yet it must be admitted that the name 'Dravidian' is much better, as it at once brings before the mind's eye the great part played by the Dravidians in the building up of the great spiritual civilisation in India. How much poorer the Indian nation would have been but for the Dravidian pioneers of civilisation." S Kasturiranga Iyengar, who was deeply involved with the Home Rule movement, also made some observations that were deeply critical of non-Brahmin politics in Madras Presidency. He observed: "the non-Brahmana movement was started with distinctly official support and guidance to produce cleavage into that community (meaning the entire south Indian society) and to protest against the national Congress' scheme; conferences have been organised with official help in several places." For more details, see *Common Weal: A Journal of National Reform* (edited by Annie Besant), 30 November 1917 and 28 December 1917.
10. Address presented to the Governor General and the Secretary of State by the Madras Adi Dravida Jana Sabha, 1917, preserved in the form of a pamphlet in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML), New Delhi.
11. *The Hindu*, 7 October 1917.
12. It has been argued that such a broad alliance of non-Brahmins was done with a definite aim to invoke the concepts of minority and majority before the colonial bureaucracy. The enormous power and prestige wielded by the Brahmins, despite their miniscule population strength, was highlighted by the non-Brahmins as the real reason behind the unequal distribution of power and privilege in the Madras Presidency. For more details, see Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 75.
13. *Joint Select Committee of Government of India Bill*, Volume III, His Majesty's Stationery Office (hereafter HMSO), London, 1919, p. 96.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 20; Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, pp. 72–73.
15. The non-Brahmin elite felt that the selection of a Tamil Brahmin Congressman,

- V S Srinivasa Sastry, would lead to brahmanisation of politics and services. It was argued that such attempts at strengthening the political supremacy of the Brahmins would be detrimental to the progress of the non-Brahmin communities. The colonial government needed to be more sympathetic towards the latter; they preferred the continuance of the British Raj for the improvement of the majority of the population suffering from poverty and illiteracy. For more details, see *The Justice*, 16 May 1919; G.O. No. 1019-1020, Public Department, 7.11.1918, TNA
16. G.O. No. 854-855, Public Department, 19.9.1918, TNA.
17. *Indian Constitutional Reforms: Report of the Franchise Committee*, 1918, Calcutta, 1919, Appendix XIV.
18. *Indian Constitutional Reforms, Report of the Southborough Committee* (also referred to as the *Report of the Franchise Committee*), Calcutta, 1919, p. 9.
19. G.O. No. 1146, Public Department, dated 31.12.1918, TNA.
20. The Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras highlighted the fact that the results of the elections held for filling the seats reserved for non-officials to the Madras Legislative Council in 1909, 1912 and 1916 revealed the supremacy of the Brahmins. For instance, in 1916, Brahmins secured as many as ten seats and non-Brahmins could bag only five. He also pointed out that though non-Brahmin voters outnumbered Brahmin voters, the former's numerical superiority was not reflected in the election results. Thus, arrangements in favour of territorial electorates would hardly ensure a meaningful representation of all sections in the society. For more details, see *ibid*.
21. The views of Alexander Cardew has been discussed in detail in a separate enclosure along with the correspondences of the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras with the Home Department of the Government of India. For more details, see *ibid*. See also *Reports of the Southborough Committee and the Government of India's Despatches on them* (1918-1919), Calcutta, 1919, pp. 124-25.
22. Since the early 1910s, Alexander Cardew had been vocal about the monopolisation of public services by Brahmins in Madras Presidency. He also expressed the opinion that simultaneous holding of ICS examinations in India and England would give the Brahmins a greater opportunity to establish their monopoly in the bureaucratic set-up of the Presidency. He observed: "It is necessary however to see whether they (reform-minded bureaucrats) have not done so even though without any such intention (substituting an oligarchy for the bureaucracy), for it would be a travesty of liberal principles to surrender the 10 millions of downtrodden, non-caste people to the control of the upper caste without any adequate safeguards. ... Is it wise to entrust the happiness and progress of the downtrodden and illiterate Pariah and Panchama community or even of the ill-educated and politically backward non-Brahmin Hindu castes, to an assembly in which the majority will probably be largely composed of and controlled by Brahmins and in any case be drawn from the literate community representing only about 7.5% of the population?" See C R Reddy Papers, File No. 45, NMML, New Delhi, cited in Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 22.
23. For more details, see Saraswathi, *Minorities of the Madras State*, p. 76; V. Geetha and S V Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium: From Iyothee Thoss to Periyar*, Calcutta, 1998 p. 156.
24. G.O. No. 142, Public Department (Confidential), dated 28.2.1920, TNA.

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25. Ibid.
26. *Dravidan*, 28 January 1920.
27. Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, p. 160.
28. Ibid.
29. *New India*, 23 March 1920.
30. The Justice Party leadership almost unanimously felt that the Award amounted to a betrayal to the non-Brahmin cause and that all its labours for the past three years had gone in vain. *The Justice*, a mouthpiece of the non-Brahmins, observed: "It [Meston Award] is a tragedy. It can never afford them protection, while however the stigma of social discrimination sticks to them." For more details, see *The Justice*, 18 March 1920.
31. *The Hindu*, 23 March 1920.
32. Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 45.
33. David Arnold has argued that Willingdon's decision on this matter might have been influenced to a great extent by his eagerness to successfully implement the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in Madras. For more details, see David Arnold, *Congress in Tamilnadu: Nationalist Politics in South India, 1919-37*, Monographs on South Asia, 1, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 56-58.
34. In fact, non-Brahmin leaders, from the very inception of the Justice Party ministry, exhibited great eagerness to utilise their political power to find new supporters among the rising middle classes. Therefore they were bent upon extracting promises from the government that non-Brahmins would be given a preference over Brahmins in public service appointments and promotions. For more details, see *ibid.*
35. Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 47.
36. The Justice Ministry backed the proposals of some 'untouchable' communities to change their old names, i.e. Pariahs and Panchamas, to Adi Dravidas. See G.O. No. 1955, Law (General) Department, dated 19.11.1921, TNA; G.O. No. 817, Law (General) Department, dated 25.3.1922, TNA.
37. Geetha and Rajadurai (*Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, pp. 174-75) point out that non-Brahmin attitudes towards the Adi Dravidas were mediated through a vortex of material interests, and this probably undermined the efforts at constructing an imagined non-Brahmin fraternity.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.
39. David Arnold has pointed out that in several parts of Tamil Nadu, the depressed classes showed signs of shifting tacit political allegiances to the Congress. See Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnadu*, p. 67.
40. The 'untouchable' communities utilised various nomenclatures to express their distinct social identity. Some of them referred to themselves as Depressed Classes and Panchamas. The Paraiyars, who were numerically the largest among the 'untouchable' communities, preferred to identify themselves as Adi Dravidas or original inhabitants of south India, in the early part of the twentieth century. The term 'Adi Dravida' was favoured because it was felt it would enable them to regain their lost status and free themselves of the pejorative connotations of terms such as 'Paraiyan'.
41. Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnadu*, p. 67.
42. For more details, see D Gopala Chettiar, *Adi Dravida Poorva Charitam* (Tamil), Madras, 1920, pp. 31-32.

43. Eugene F Irschik, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separation, 1916-1929*, Berkeley, 1969, p. 178.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
45. S K Gupta, *The Scheduled Castes in Modern Indian Politics: Their Emergence as a Political Power*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 187.
46. The Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha observed, "We are particularly desirous of a separate electorate being created for us. Representation by nomination is no representation at all." *New India*, 9 January 1919.
47. Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, pp. 180-81.
48. In the article bearing the title 'Are We Sudras?', the author vehemently argued that term 'Sudra' had been applied to tribal races such as the Kols, who were vanquished by the Aryans. The author pointed out that there were several references in ancient Tamil literature which proved that the Brahmin-non-Brahmin divide was not very stringent. In the ancient Tamil epic *Silappadikaram*, a Brahmin lady by the name Devanti was a close confidante of Kannagi. Brahmins also worked in the house of danseuses. For more details, see *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), April 1920, pp. 26-32.
49. In an article which appeared in *Adi Dravidan* on 15 June 1920, it was stated that Tiruvalluvar and Nandanar had crossed the barriers of untouchability by their unparalleled devotion or *bhakti*. In another article which appeared on 15 July 1920, an author by the name S V N Alvar demolished the myth centering around the Aryan invasion of south India. He asserted that the indigenous people of south India, i.e. the Dravidians, possessed a culture of their own which was by no means inferior to the cultural elements of Aryan civilization. In other words, there was an attempt to emphasise the links between Dravidian civilization and that of the Indus Valley Civilisation.
50. *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 August 1920, pp. 93-95.
51. In fact, there were a series of caste riots in Ramnad involving the dominant rural groups and the Adi Dravidas, who were mostly 'untouchable' agricultural labourers. For more details, see *ibid.*, pp. 95-97.
52. Swami Advaidananda was particularly critical of the Congress leaders for treating the problems from an entirely moralist perspective. He felt that instead of exhorting the Adi Dravidas to lead a life of virtue, Gandhi could have initiated a thorough overhauling of the social system by undertaking movements in favour of temple entry by all classes of the society. *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 May 1921, pp. 30-39.
53. *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 June 1921.
54. *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 17 August 1921, pp. 82-84.
55. A report published in *New India* on 2 August 1919, objected to the nomination of M C Rajah on account of two reasons. In the first place, Rajah was declared an anti-nationalist, since he did not believe in the Indian nation. Secondly, he was condemned for his anti-Brahmin sentiments and for his attempts to establish a distinct "Authee Dravida" identity.
56. *New India*, 23 December 1920.
57. R T Ramakrishna Pillay, in *New India* (23 July 1920), observed: "When there is a divided opinion on the subject and when there is a single representative in the Corporation [in this case the Madras Corporation] who can advocate one of the two sides, it is unfair for the Corporation to dispose of the case without hearing the other side. No non-Brahmana can represent the other side unless the Panchamas are playing into their hands."

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58. Ibid.
59. For more details, see Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, pp. 176–77.
60. The Madras Labour Union was formed on 27 April 1918 by B P Wadia, T V Kalyanasundaram and others, and as a result of the combined efforts of the Home Rule Leaguers and Congress propagandists. For more details, see C S Krishna, *Labour Movement in Tamilnadu, 1918–1933*, Calcutta, 1989, p. 57. Also see Rakhahari Chatterjee, *Working Class and the Nationalist Movement in India: The Critical Years*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 84.
61. Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 129.
62. For more details, see E D Murphy, 'Class and Community in India: The Madras Labour Union 1918–1921', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, July–September 1977, pp. 306–08.
63. For more details, see, G.O. No. 1912, Law (General) Department, dated 27.6.1924, TNA.
64. *The Hindu*, 22 June 1921.
65. *Madras Legislative Council Proceedings* (hereafter *MLCP*), Vol. III, 12 October 1921, p. 1012.
66. G.O. No. 1844, Law (General) Department, dated 2.8.1922, TNA.
67. By the end of May 1921, M C Rajah and Swami Desikananda exhorted the Adi Dravida mill-hands residing in the Puliyanthope *cheri* not to participate in the strike. The Assistant Commissioner of Labour was also present at these meetings. *MLCP*, Vol. III, p. 1012.
68. Murphy, 'Class and Community in India', p. 314.
69. *The Hindu*, 12 August 1921.
70. G.O. No. 671, Public Department, dated 7.10.1921, TNA.
71. The violence was particularly intense between the Muslims and the Adi Dravidas who lived in close proximity in the *cheris*. Some of them worked together in the slaughterhouse in Perambur. In March 1921, on a day of *hartal* condemning the imprisonment of Yakub Hasan, Adi Dravidas in the slaughterhouse refused to obey the Muslims' demand to stop slaughter. In the ensuing conflict an Adi Dravida was killed and in retaliation Adi Dravidas burnt four Muslim huts in the *cheris*. See Murphy, 'Class and Community in India', p. 315.
72. *The Hindu*, 9 July 1921.
73. Murphy, 'Class and Community in India', p. 315.
74. Ibid., p. 316.
75. *Madras Mail*, 17 September 1921; Murphy, 'Class and Community in India', p. 317.
76. When the mills resumed their operations, nearly 5,000 Adi Dravidas remained in their jobs, thereby excluding many of the caste Hindus and Muslims. For more details, see *Madras Mail*, 21 October 1921.
77. Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, p. 183.
78. G.O. No. 671, Public Department, dated 7.10.1921, TNA.
79. Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, p. 185.
80. Ibid.
81. The committee pointed out that the Adi Dravidas were the worst sufferers and that only about one-sixth of the huts belonging to Muslims and caste Hindus had been razed to the ground. G.O. No. 671, Public Department, dated 7.10.1921, TNA.

82. *MLCP*, Volume III, 12 October 1921, pp. 1005-08, 1022.
83. Rajah observed: "If they [Adi Dravidas] had been with the rioters in their rioting, they would have certainly lost their lives. The very fact that no Adi Dravida was shot clearly indicates that the Adi Dravidas were not creating the mischief ... but my friend Mr Thanikachalam Chettiyar has said nothing about the throwing of bombs which has become the fashion of the rioters. How many lives have been lost by the throwing of bombs, who threw them, these are questions which my honourable friend ought to have put before the Council." For more details, see *ibid.*, pp. 1012-13.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 1028.
85. The government strongly stated that its law enforcement agencies had never been soft or partial towards the Adi Dravidas, but had treated them on an equal footing with the Muhammadans and caste Hindus. For more details, see *ibid.*
86. Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, p. 187.
87. *New India*, 13 October 1921.
88. Justice Party leaders like Rao Bahadur A S Krishna Rao Pantulu, P Theagaraya Chetty and O Thanikachalam Chetty argued that it was beyond the rights of the Labour Commissioner as a civil officer to persuade the Adi Dravidas not to participate in the strike. See *MLCP*, Volume III, 1921, pp. 1023, 1032.
89. The consensualists of the Justice Party, like the Raja of Panagal, P Theagaraya Chetti and O Thanikachalam Chetti, held that the actions of the Labour Commissioner had alienated the 'untouchables' from other non-Brahmin castes. The progressive Justices also stated that the British members of the Cabinet had greater decision-making powers than the Indian ministers. They felt that neither the Indian ministers nor the legislature could change the labour policies, which had resulted in the secession of the 'untouchables' from non-Brahmin communities. For more details, see *MLCP*, Volume III, 21 October 1921, p. 1013.
90. The *Adi Dravidan* complained that the slogan of non-Brahminism could never really solve their problems, as long as the domination of the Pillais, Mudaliars and Reddis continued in the organisational structure of the Justice Party. For more details, see *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 November 1921, pp. 131-32.
91. *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 December 1921, p. 156.
92. In this conference, O Thanikachalam Chetti had demanded the abolition of the Department of Labour. He argued that the functioning of the Department had resulted in conflicts between non-Brahmin communities and Adi Dravidas. For more details, see *New India*, 23 May 1922.
93. *New India*, 21 July 1922.
94. For more details, see Geetha and Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, p. 195.
95. Rajah blamed the Justice Party leaders for the under-representation of Adi Dravidas in the Madras Legislative Council and the local bodies. He argued that all the important political and administrative positions had been monopolised by the Justice Party ministers and their supporters. As a consequence, the principle of communal representation could never be translated in real terms. For more details, see *ibid.*, p. 196.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.
97. Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste*, p. 133.
98. In fact, it was argued that the term Dravida would not create much confusion since there was a clear-cut distinction with the caste Dravidas, who happened to

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- be clean non-Brahmin Hindus possessing distinct caste appellations. For more details, see G.O. No. 1680, Law (General) Department, dated 20.10.1921, TNA.
99. The government differed with the suggestion of the high-caste Hindu reformers that the term 'Dravida Samanyas' be used for addressing the depressed class population. However, it did agree that terms such as 'Pariah' and 'Panchama' carrying an element of stigma ought to be eliminated through the use of new terms such as 'Adi Dravida'. For more details, see G.O. No. 785, Law (General) Department, dated 7.7.1921, TNA.
100. Swami Sahajananda advised the 'untouchables' to adopt clean habits. He felt that by practising such habits, the depressed classes could gain social respectability in the eyes of the high-caste Hindus. But a few others felt that the 'untouchable' communities also needed temple entry rights in order to be socially equal to the caste Hindus. It was suggested that temples usually managed by upper-caste Hindus could divert a part of their surplus revenue for building schools accessible to children of all communities. For more details, see *Adi Dravidan* (Tamil), 15 May 1921 and 15 November 1921.
101. G.O. No. 138, Public Department, dated 14.2.1922, TNA; see also *Fortnightly Reports For the First Half of July, 1921* (Confidential), TNA.
102. Ibid.
103. Depressed class leaders like M C Rajah, supported by organisations like the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, pressurised the government to constitute a separate electoral roll for the depressed classes for ensuring their proper representation in the local bodies. The government, however, made it clear that the District Municipalities and Local Board Act of 1920 safeguarded the interests of the depressed classes by securing appointment of their members to nominated seats in the local bodies. The government stated that as early as November 1919, the Madras Legislative Council adopted a resolution instructing Collectors to nominate suitable candidates belonging to these classes to the various local bodies and municipalities. The government also reiterated the view (vide G.O. 2525, Local and Municipal Department, dated 12.12.1922) that it had requested Collectors and Presidents of the District Boards to ensure proper representation of the depressed classes in these bodies. For more details, see G.O. No. 1431, Local and Self Government Department, dated 21.06.1923, TNA.
104. G.O. No. 1070, Law (General) Department, dated 27.03.1924, TNA.

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***Silpis* in Ancient India**

Beyond their Ascribed Locus in Ancient Society

R N Misra

This paper is about artists in ancient and early medieval India¹ – artists who, in various ways, planned, constructed and embellished monuments, religious or otherwise, which today remind us of their merit. In the colonial discourse they figure as anonymous ‘craftsmen’. Brahmanical texts describe them as *silpis* and relegate them to the rank of sudra. Artists, on their part, seem to have persistently subverted this dispensation, and sometimes merrily too. Their disagreement with it is apparent, time and again. It emerges in their assertions of freedom in creative modes.² It floats up in the canonical assertions about an alternative domain of spirituality where ‘liberation’ lay open only to those adept in *silpa*, not others: *nahi janmantaram tasya silpasiddhir bhavet yatha*. It surfaces in their audacious claims to be like ‘gods’;³ and it may easily be conceded that they indeed had the power and skill to ‘make’ gods (in images). They express their self-worth in other ways too. On occasions, artists take pride in being ‘reciter of *sastra*’ (*sastrajapi*), a privilege barred to the sudra in the *Dharmashastras*. They revel in being ‘dear’ to rulers, or in being titled as *thakkura*, *ranaka* and *samanta*, or as adept in (*silpa*) *vidya* and *vijnana*, even as others like *karanika*, *kayastha* and *vastavya* in the lower rungs of the state bureaucracy vied with them to take their place; presumably because of the privileges that accrued to them. No wonder, as their vision of a monument took a material shape they could triumphantly proclaim how their skilled act beguiled others, including divine beings.⁴ We will return to these assertions later.

A review of the status of ancient artists thus leads to an acrimonious arena of contest marked by their *Dharmashastra*-legislated sudra status and its subversion engineered by their recalcitrance – a contest between what we may call the prescribed status, on the one hand, and that to be appropriated, on the other. Inscriptions from early medieval times support this conclusion about artists’ defiance of Dharmashastric views. Let us briefly look into their mutually opposing, rival postures, beginning with the Dharmashastric side of the story which seems to be loaded against the artists.

It would easily be conceded that before its devaluation in later times, *silpa* was a highly exalted entity right from the Vedic times for its propensity to create and sustain consummate works of beauty and wonder.⁵ As for the term *silpi*, or 'artisan', it came into vogue with Panini⁶ (c. 300 BC) in reference to arts and crafts, e.g., dance and music, and the crafts of a hair-dresser or potter. Ancient texts do not mention artists as an exclusive category till the time of the Mauryas who are specifically noted for resorting to 'image-making to earn revenue':⁷ *Mauryaih art'abhih archa prakalpita*.⁸ In the narrative of the *Dharmashastras* and Buddhist *Vinaya*, *silpi* occurs as a generic term for the occupational class pursuing different crafts. The *Dharmashastras* have little to mark their exclusivity and the descriptions there tend to indicate that artists pursuing art-work (*silpa*) were a part of the class constituted of artisans and workers of different orders. Inscriptions, on the contrary, contain information which helps in mapping the artists' position and status with greater certainty. Such inscriptions from Mauryan times onwards identify them and their sub-categories by their names, titles and designations, skills, hierarchical authority, institutional status, specialisation in particular areas of activity, relative position as apprentice or master and in many other ways, but not by their caste.⁹ The cryptic epigraphic bits, however, reflect positive realities which the textual tradition fails to register in harping on artists' sudra status and the concomitant debilities that would burden them. A brief account of such dispensations follows.

Specific references exclusive to artists or their caste are missing in the *Dharmashastras*, though their kindred groups – *taksan* or 'carver', *ayaskara* or *vardhaki*, for instance – do figure in them. In the *Ma'rabhashya* on Panini (II.4.10), a *taksan* is considered a sudra and equivalent in status to an ironsmith (*ayaskara*). Ushanas enumerates *taksan* as of the *pratiloma* order, born of a brahmana female and *sucaka* male.¹⁰ In another instance, according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* (I.10), Visvakarma was born as a brahmana with the blessings of Brahma, and he married Ghritaci, an *apsara* who was reborn as a milkmaid. This union brought about the birth of *jatis* like tailor, potter and carpenter, as well as the *jatis* adept in *tantra vidya*. The designation *silpi* is commonly applied to all such occupational groups.

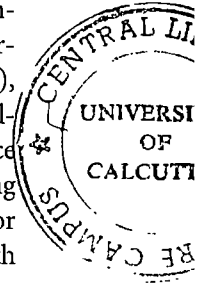
In the *Gautama Smriti* (VII.2), the *silpi* (*karu/taksa*) is clubbed with others of impure occupations. Others in the list consist of a fallen woman (*pumscali*), artisan (*taksa*), the condemned (*kadarya*), royal servant (*bandhanika*), physician (*chikitsaka*), hunter (*mrigayu*), and also those who lived on left-over food, or those inimical to *ganas* (*ganad-isanam*). The *Smriti* ordains that food offered by them must not be eaten.¹¹ It is interesting to note that *silpis* as well as physicians figure in this list of the ritually

impure or despised ones. In the same text (VII.1), it is said that a brahmana can accept food from a trader who is not a *silpi*. The *Laghu Harirti Smriti* (II.12) prescribes *vrittis*, 'means of livelihood', only to sudras – *vrittis* constituting *silpas*. The *Parasara Smriti* (II.18) adds agriculture, trade and *silpas* to these *vrittis* and accepts them for vaisyas too, thus bringing the two *varnas* together in the same category: *vaisyah surastatha kuryat krisi vanijya silpakan*. These typical excerpts from *Dharmashastras* explicitly demonstrate contempt for *silpa* and *silpi* in imparting a low status to both.¹²

It may be fair to assume that by the Early Historical phase, *silpis*¹³ had been ascribed to the fourth *varna* and, along with *silpas*, they were relegated to 'low' status.¹⁴ The Dharmashastric injunctions about their ritual impurity as well as the vacillating Buddhist views on their ordinary status kept defining their low status. The implication of *silpa* as *vritti* is quite apparent in the references.¹⁵ The craftsmen engaged in such *vrittis* (sources of livelihood: *tesam tad vartanad vrittirucyate*),¹⁶ which included *silpa* too, may have been on the rise economically – some of them even paid taxes to the state¹⁷ – but their crafts did not command respectability.¹⁸

The situation was no different in Buddhism. With its pre-eminence in the oligarchic systems of the *ganas* where *silpa*, besides *karma*, *kula* and *jati* decided the status,¹⁹ *sippam* is found split into *hina* (low), *puthu* (ordinary) and *ukkattha* (higher) categories in early texts. Of these, the first two, consigned to the 'low' and 'disdained' category, bear similarity with the Dharmashastric dispensations. Other crafts, like *mudda* (counting on fingers), *ganana* (accounting) and *lekha* (writing), were not 'disdained' and belonged to the category of 'high' crafts.²⁰ Even those occupations which once enjoyed a respectable status came to be included, in Buddhist texts, among the vocations of people of 'low birth' (*hina jati*), as early as the fifth or fourth century BC. For instance, *rathakara* is sometimes equated with *chammakara*, both considered 'low' – the former by 'birth' and the latter by 'occupation'.²¹

We may skip a detailed survey of such textual prescriptions as they have been amply researched and commented upon for quite some time,²² but may still mention that sometimes, even in their condemnation, the artists' accomplishments in terms of their knowledge and skills come out strongly. It needs being emphasised that such condemnations tend to lose steam as they concede space to the condemned – which included *silpis* too – for their learning and skill. This grudging recognition also offers hints of tension between the section of society which prescribed debilities and those recalcitrants who stood in opposition to them and eventually came to appropriate status, eminence, wealth, patronage and much more, regardless of contempt from the orthodoxy. A quotation from the *Maitri Upanishad*²³ (VII.8) explains the situation appropriately.



The text contains a discourse on “hindrances to the sacred knowledge” (*jnanopasargas*) with an exhortation that “mingling of the heavenly with the un-heavenly is the root cause of delusion or false doctrine” where “fools stick to the clump of grass”. Interestingly, those who “ceaselessly practised *silpa* for a living” (*nityasilpopajivinah*) figure in this category of “fools sticking to the clump of grass”, and they stand denounced with contempt and disparagement, branded as “unworthy of heaven” (*asvargyah*) and “thieves” (*taskara*). It is to be noted that *silpins* – denounced here – are also clubbed in the text together with those who were “ceaselessly amused” (*nityapramudita*), those “ceaselessly peregrinating” (*nityaprasavita*) and “ceaselessly begging” (*nityayachanaka*). Town-beggars, pupils of sudras and those sudras who are proficient in the *shastras* (*purayachaka ayajnayajakah sudrasishyah sudrascha shastravidvansah*) also figure in this ‘hate-list’. The enumeration goes on further to include *chata* (mercenaryes?), *jata*, *nata* (jugglers), *bhata* (warriors) religious mendicants, stage artists, those engaged in royal service, degraded and outcasts (*chata-jata-natapravirjitar-angavatarino rajakarmani patitadayah*).

Also included in the *Maitri Upanishad* list are those who claimed controlling (*samayam*) demi-gods like Yaksha, etc. Or, those like the *kashaya-kundalin* and *kapalikas* and others who “wish to encounter the Vedicists by [offering] false devices of arguments, [or by] cheating and magic”: *vrithatarka-drstanta-kuhak-enārajalair-vaiddikeshu paristhatum icchati*). The *Maitri Upanishad* ordains that one should not live with such people for they are “openly thieves” and “unfit for heaven” (*prakasabhuta te vai taskara asvargyah*). The contempt for and condemnation of *silpis* along with the others of the category expressly stem from the argument of the *Maitri Upanishad* (VII.7–8) that these (heretical) groups are “no-soul” theorists. The explicit statement of their abilities, e. g., their being “learned in *shastras*”, should not be missed amidst this despise and condemnation. Obviously, these groups of people seem to have earned condemnation in the *Maitri Upanishad* because they did not conform to the Vedic beliefs and temper, especially in their doctrine of *atman*, and whatever they professed was supposed to be a “hindrance” to true knowledge. The intensity and tenor of criticism here are exceptional. But the criticism of *silpis* in it is significant in elucidating that they now belonged to a group which apparently professed a counter-ideology that was not in tune with the Vedic temper.

Eventually, by Early Medieval times, artists seem to ride over their relegation to the status of sudra, altering the situation in their favour and, in the process, acquiring honour, pelf and glory. A combination of factors seems to have contributed to their ascendancy. Their skill, learning and their proximity to patrons of higher status like rulers, their family, and

men and women of means who aspired to commission works to redound their glory, must have catapulted them into prominence. References to these factors, among others, are not wanting in the inscriptions of early medieval India. For instance, a Chandella inscription from Kalanjara refers to Padma who was "the king's favourite artist".²⁴ Another artist, Stotakachari of Visvamitra *gotra* and Hammigade house, is described as "supreme lord of Lankadvipapura ... versed in all *shastras*, sought after to construct ornamental buildings and upper storeys, adorned with all qualities of head ..., distinguished in giving advice."²⁵ Aided by such skills and learning, the artist rose to high positions and received titles like *thakkura*, *ranaka* and *samanta*. The Deopara inscription of Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty mentions Sulapani, the "chief" (*cudamani*) of a *silpa goshthi* of Varendra, as *ranaka*.²⁶ Pannaka/Panaka figures simply as an engraver in one record, but in the Nibinna Plates of Mahasivagupta Yayati (tenth century), he is titled as *thakkura*.²⁷ Similarly, we find the *aksasalin* Khandimalla mentioned as *samanta*.²⁸ The rise of some of the artists to such exalted status (and whatever went with it, which is not indicated) signifies their substantively enlarged status during the medieval times. This must have brought to them material privileges and economic well-being, and perhaps some ritual freedom too. For instance, apart from Stotakachari and his access to the *sastras*, we have a *silpi* who "could recite *shastra*".²⁹ If we assume that artists, typed into the role of sudras, were denied ritual freedom in respect of reading and reciting *shastra*, these references may cancel out such priestly restrictions. Like the engagement of artists with *shastra*, *silpa*'s identification with or transition into *vidya* also seems to have continued unabated. Artists were often qualified by these terms. For instance, *sutradhara* Chitaku is described as *vidyapati gambhirah*.³⁰

As *vidya*, *silpa* is supposed to stand supreme even as it perpetually affords *ananda* (pleasure).³¹ *Vidyas* seem to have represented the cognitive element in a system of ideas, and their number and relative importance kept on vacillating depending on particular schools of thought and practice.³² In the *Vakyapadiyam* (I.117), *vidya*, *silpa* and *kala* occur together.³³ In the *Kavyamimamsa*, *silpa* remains secure in its status as *vidya*, singly as well as in alliance with other disciplines. Rajasekhara³⁴ enumerates *silpi-shastra*, 'art and architecture', in his list of *vidyas*.³⁵ In any case, artists possessed of (*silpa*) *vidya*, a universally ennobling entity, could have risen in the reckoning and carved out an enviable niche exclusive to them. Inscriptions seem to bear this out, especially as we find in them instances of individuals of higher caste and status vying to take up the role and designation of *sutradhara*, the chief architect. Thus, an inscription from Rajasthan (AD 966) refers to a kshatriya who took up the occupation of *sutradhara*.³⁶ Another inscription from Kusuma (Rajasthan) similarly

refers to a kshatriya named Sthavira as the engraver of the record, which was a job of artists.³⁷

Instances of incursion of persons of other ranks and status into the functional set-up of artists are available in the records, especially in the cases of *vastavya*, *kayastha* and *karanika*. The emergent situation, in any case, represents social mobility among the ranks of artists, indicating at the same time an opening up of opportunities at the level of certain offices of the state where their entry allowed them to intermix and interchange their functions and skills with other functionaries who traditionally performed other roles.³⁸ The rigours of the artists' low status were dented further as subordinate officials, namely, *kayastha* and *karanika*, graduated to performing tasks related to art and architecture. In these cases, their names and functions along with their designations are found specifically recorded in inscriptions. That *kayasthas* formed a part of the state bureaucracy needs no elaboration, but their acts as builders of monuments are worth noticing. Thus, *kayastha* Devagana is mentioned as *rupakra siromani*, "the crest jewel among sculptors", who built the temple of Siva-Bilvapani at Samba (Bilaspur district?, Chhattisgarh).³⁹ Similarly, the *vastavyas* Vidya-dhara and Purushottama designed and built a temple of Rama, and excavated a tank somewhere near Rewa.⁴⁰ Likewise, a "writer" of records claims "adeptness in *silpa*".⁴¹ Several *karanikas*, some of them *kayasthas*, are mentioned in the Gahadavala records, though their connections with *silpa* are not specifically mentioned.⁴² It is quite probable that the engravers of records were *silpis* in the first place, taking up, on the side, the job of engraving records on stones or copper-plates as they were no narrow specialists. We have the Rajin Stone Inscription mentioning Jalahastin, a *silpa-salin* whose son, the "pious" (*sadhu*) Durgahastin, engraved the record.⁴³ Such instances represent a role-shift and seem laden with hints of competition. Artists like Devagana, a *kayastha-rupakara*, may indicate artists filling the ranks of the state's lower bureaucracy, rendering those offices fit enough to undertake artistic works. Such instances may also indicate competition for the same space between artists of distinction at one end and the state's subordinate bureaucrats on the other, with incursions into each other's respective domains even as the incumbents proclaimed their competence in art-related vocations. Such a telescoping of two roles into the same office must have allowed the incumbent to switch over to other works without renouncing his original occupational station.⁴⁴ It thus turns out that *silpis*, especially architects and sculptors, had perhaps managed to secure the ranks of *vastavyas*, *karanikas* and *kayasthas*, which originally were (non-caste-specific) bureaucratic positions in the state. Similarly, the *vastavyas*, *karanikas*, etc., had also made inroads into the exclusive art-related territory of *silpis*. In the cases quoted above, it is seen that none of

those *kayasthas* and *karanikas* really relinquished their other original role or title while performing tasks that fell normally within the exclusive domain of artists. What needs to be underscored is that the merger of different roles into the same office allowed the incumbents in bureaucracy or *silpa* to switch over to other functions even as their traditional functions, whether in the arts or in bureaucracy, continued. The emergent situation may also indicate an increasing involvement and patronage of rulers and the state in art-related enterprises. The artists' identity, nothing to do with their prescribed sudra status, is writ large in these instances.

It is likely that such transformations took place in the Middle Ages due to the affluence, honour and authority that *silpis* and *sutradharas* might have come to command. No wonder, then, that at the exalted level of *sutradharas*, instances of the elites competing with artists for that rank are fairly recurrent. For instance, an inscription from south India refers to Mallavijaya, son of a *dandanayaka*, as the *sutradhara* responsible for enlarging a town.⁴⁵ The cases of Nagapala, the son of *pandit* Uhila, and Jayata-simha, the son of a *bhogika*,⁴⁶ mark similar transformations.⁴⁷ Recognition of artists by rulers and chieftains seems to have brought prestige to their ranks, valorised their status and, ultimately, liberated them from the disabilities of their assigned sudra status. Their profession seems to have become lucrative, accruing monetary support to them, which again is recorded in the inscriptions. An inscription from Karnataka of the time of the Chalukyas of Kalyani suggests a land grant to a *chittari* (painter-sculptor) named Jakka.⁴⁸ There are several epigraphic references to cash transactions with artists in connection with their work on monuments. The Nadlai Stone Inscription of Kelhana (vs 1228) mentions *sutradhara* Pahini and his team of four others, including a lady, who received three hundred and thirty *drammas* in connection with some work in respect of a Siva temple.⁴⁹ The Markula (Himachal Pradesh) Image Inscription, similarly, refers to making (*ghatita*) of an image by Jinaka at a cost of "two thousand" (coins?). The inscription also mentions another amount of 4,645 (?), but its import is uncertain.⁵⁰ The Lui Fountain Inscription of AD 1105–06 in Himachal Pradesh refers to a fountain made by carpenter Kamlone (under the direction of) a *sutradhara*. The inscription quotes the cost (contract money?) as 20 (30?) *drammas*.⁵¹ Monetary transactions in respect of payments to artists seem to have become common in the Middle Ages and these references attest to it.

It thus appears that artists grew in stature with their accomplishments, skills, learning and 'knowledge' (*vidya*), appropriating privileges that were not allowed to them in the traditional shastric dispensations. As experts in their vocation they were apparently much in demand, and they received patronage from the high and the mighty of society. This must have helped

them to erode the rigours of the caste status imposed upon them which they continually subverted. They seem to have flouted restrictions at will, learning, reciting and practising the *shastras*, acquiring monetary gains, landing certain bureaucratic positions, securely occupying the high professional stature of *sutradhara* for which even individuals of the upper classes competed, and sometimes even rising up as chieftains with titles like *ranaka*, *thakkura* and *samanta*, where Dharmashastric injunctions perhaps failed to work. We even find an independent domain of spirituality where the *silpasiddhi* that lay in the domain of artists became the path to salvation in terms of freedom from the birth-rebirth cycle. This is intriguing because it betrays acceptance of a way of life ordained by sections with which the artists are found perpetually in dissent.

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Notes

1. Ancient texts and commentaries club all the different occupational classes together within the all-encompassing term *silpi*, or identify them by their particular vocations, where artists are nearest to the categories consisting of *silakuta*, *tatthakara*, *vardhaki*, *taksan*. Their engagement with art activity, however, is often not established from the stray notices unless they are specific to art work. So, the task of identifying artists out from their kindred occupational classes requires supporting evidence. Inscriptions help in this exercise. It is, however, conceded that artists engaged in art work must also have worked both for the community and the market.
2. *Silpi kridati tattraiva guror ajnanusaratah. Silpa Prakasa*.
3. Chhitaku, a *sutradhara*, claims to be like Narayana; cf. V V Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era', *C.I.I.*, Vol. IV, ii, 1955, pp. 556-57. Udega, a *ruvari* or 'sculptor', claims to be like Brahma; cf. Srinivas H Ritti, 'Udega, the Chief Architect of the Saraswati Temple at Gadag', in Frederick M Asher and G S Gai, *Indian Epigraphy: Its Bearing on the History of Art*, Oxford, IBH and American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 213-14.
4. Cf. the Rashtrakuta grant of Karka Suvarnavarsa (AD 812-13), where the artist who made the Kailasa temple at Ellora is supposed to have expressed surprise at his accomplishment of making a superbly beautiful monument all of a sudden! J F Fleet, 'Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions', *Indian Antiquary*, 12, 1984, pp. 159, 163.
5. R N Misra, 'Silpa', in Bettina Baumer, ed., *Kalatattakosa: A Lexicon of Fundamental Concepts in Indian Arts*, IGNCA/Motilal Banarsai Dass, New Delhi, 1988.
6. *Ashtadhyayi*, VI.2.62 and also Patanjali IV.4.55.
7. Ramanath Misra, *Bharatiya Murtikala ka Itihasa* (Hindi), rpt., Granthashilpi, Delhi, 2008, p. 59.
8. *Arthashastra*, in its chapter on *karukara rakshanam* (IV.1.1-65), refers to artisan

categories. Among them, a reference is also made to artisans called *karuasasi-tarah* and *savittakaravah*. They were protected by their guilds and were supposed to be men of means (*arthyapratikarah*), possibly considered fit enough to make "good anything connected with the object entrusted". Cf. Kangle, Vol. II, 2000, p. 254, fn 2, for the interpretations by Meyer and others

9. *Taksa, rupadaksa, sailalaka, saila-var dhaki, mithika, kadhicaka, kammantika, avesarin, navakarmika, sutragrahin, sutradhara, aksasalin (or arkasalin), vijna-nika, sthapati, taksaka, vardhaki, rupakara, antevāsi, bhadanta and silpi*. Or the categories consisting of *chitrakaraka, vardhaki-rupakara, karupatrika, pustaka-raka, pustakarmakaraka, lepaka*. Cf. R N Misra, *Ancient Artist and Art Activity*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1975, pp. 7–21, 11; R N Misra, *Silpa in Indian Tradition: Concept and Instrumentalities*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study/Aryan Books International, Shimla/Delhi, 2009, pp. 61–64, 90–96.
10. Cf. P V Kane, *History of Dharmasastras*, Vol. II (1), Poona, 1941, pp. 82–83.
11. Mihir Chand, *Dharmasastras*, Delhi, p. 600.
12. Cf. D P Chattopadhyaya, *Science and Society in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 220. Manu disallows certain *vrittis* to the twice-born but reservedly concedes that they may practise these *vrittis* during times of exceptional distress. These 'low' occupations consisted of *vidya, silpa, bhrutaseva, vipanan* and *krishi*. The reference to *vidya* here is interesting and it perhaps refers to non-scriptural (anti-scriptural?) knowledge. In the *Nilamata Purana* (V.522) *karmajivins* and *silpis* are assigned to the sudra *varna*; the latter included weaver, carpenter, goldsmith, silversmith and blacksmith, all of whom commanded respect and exchanged gifts with the higher *varnas* during the Mahimana celebrations. They worshipped their tools in the temple of Durga. The *Dharmashastras* allowed them to ply the trade of *vaisyas*. Cf. Vedkumari, *The Nilamat Purana*, Vol. I, Srinagar, 1968, pp. 86, 87.
13. Artists' label as *silpi* seems to be in order because in tradition they were professionally and creatively given to "reconstituting forms" (*rupa nirmana*) which defined *silpa*. Cf. R N Misra, 'Silpa'.
14. Crafts and occupational categories had started proliferating during the later Vedic period. The *Vajasaneyi Samhita* (XXX.6.21) and the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (III.4.2.7) mention many of them, e.g., chariot makers, carpenters, potters, smiths, jewellers, herdsmen, etc. Among these, *rathakaras* and *taksas* were important as they occur in the list of the *ratnins* who, according to the *Maitrayani Samhita* (II.6.5), anointed a king and thus validated his status. Total devaluation of *silpa* had not come about till at least the fourth century BC as *silpa* still denoted a kind of 'ceremonial act' in the *Ashvalayana Srauta Sutra* (VIII.4.5–8; IX.10.11, 11.2). Such ambivalence about the status of *silpa* continued even later.
15. The *Ashtadhyayi* mentions crafts such as pottery-making, carpentry, dying and dress-making, along with those related to working on gems and metals like gold, silver, tin and iron. Cf. Vasudeva Saran Agrawala, *India as Known to Panini*, 1955, pp. 229–35.
16. *Baudhayana Dharmasastra* IX.6.1. The *Sarvadarsana Sangraha* defines *vritti* as *anarjanopayam vrittayah*, Cf. Bohtlingk and Roth (rpt. 1966) sv. *vrtti* for such and other meanings of the term.
17. Cf. Manu, VII.138; Gautama X.31; Vishnu 32. According to *Vasistha Dhs.* (XIX.28), in lieu of taxes they could work for one day in a month for the king.
18. Yajnavalkya (III.42) recommends *silpa* as one of the ten sources of livelihood for

- the high-born only in times of distress. The *Gautama Smṛiti* (X.7) assigns all the occupational crafts (*silpavrittis*) to sudras. The *Sankha Smṛiti* (I.5) similarly assigns to sudras, service to *dvijas* (twice-born) besides the practice of *silpa*: *sudrasya dvijasusrusa sarvasilpani capyatha*.
19. Cf. Uma Chakravarti, *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Oxford, University Press, Delhi, 1987, pp. 94–114.
 20. Cf. Horner, *The Book of Discipline*, Vol. II, PTS, London, 1942–63, p. 176: The *Digha Nikaya* distinguishes between the kinds of low birth and low occupations. Ibid., p. 173 fn 7.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Cf. Ram Saran Sharma, *Sudraṇ ka prachin itihasa* (in Hindi), Delhi, 1979; Suvira Jaiswal, Suvira, 'Studies in Indian Social History: Trends and Prospects', *Indian Historical Review*, 6, 1979–80. In respect of artists, see Misra, *Ancient Artist and Art Activity*; also, Misra, *Silpa in Indian Tradition*, pp. 9–12.
 23. V P Limaye and R D Vadekar, *Eighteen Principal Upanishads*, Vol. I, Vaidika Samsodhana Mandal, Poona, 1958, p. 355.
 24. Misra, *Ancient Artist and Art Activity*, p. 67.
 25. Ibid., p. 45.
 26. For the title *ranaka*, as also *thakkura* and *samanta* indicating "class monarchies", cf. Irfan Habib, 'Landed Property in Pre-British India', in R S Sharma (ed.), *Indian Society*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 285; Ghoshal, *Contributions to the History of Hindu Revenue System*, Calcutta, 1929, pp. 241, 259–60, quoted by Habib, *ibid.*, p. 285. Habib indicates how "new potentates" such as *samanta*, *ranaka*, *thakkura* emerged as dominant groups as a result of "territorial distribution that took place among the dominant class". About Sulapani, cf. Misra, *Ancient Artist and Art Activity*, p. 43 fn 57.
 27. Cf. Shastri, *Inscriptions of Sarabhapuriyas, Panduvamsis and Somavamsis*, Part II, Indian Council for Historical Research and Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi, 1995, pp. 245, 245 fn 63.
 28. Cf. D R Bhandarkar, 'List of Inscriptions in Northern India', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vols. XIX–XXII (hereafter Bhandarkar List), Inscription No. 2048; *Epigraphia Indica*, XXX, 26.
 29. Cf. Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era', Inscription No. 104.
 30. Ibid., pp. 556–57.
 31. *Silpavidya sada srestha sarvadanandadayika*; *Silpaprakasa*, II.730.
 32. For a detailed discussion on *silpa* as *vidya*, *vijnana* and *sastra*, cf. Misra, *Silpa in Indian Tradition*, pp. 141–46.
 33. ... *sarvavidya silpanam kalanam copabandhini* ...
 34. *Kavyamimamsa*, Ch. II, p. 25.
 35. Rajasekhara comes to a final list of eighteen such *vidyas* including the fourteen enunciated by the ancient *acharyas* and four others enumerated by him, describing their sub-categories and adding *sahitya vidya* to this entire genre. *Kavyamimamsa*, pp. 26–27.
 36. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 47–48.
 37. Ibid., Vol. XXXIV, pp. 47–49.
 38. Yet the exclusion of artists such as *sutradhara*, *silpi*, *rupakara*, *vijnanika*, etc., from royal charters in the list of addressees; on the one hand, and, on the other, an exclusive presence of those categories of artists outside the state's bureaucratic apparatus, as evinced in the epigraphs, apparently betrays mutual exclusivity of

the two domains. It appears that artists' organizational set-up was more or less exclusive, though coexistent in relation to the bureaucracy.

39. Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era', Inscription No. 93.
40. Ibid., pp. 357–58. For a *vastavya tatthakara* named Harivardhana under the Bhauma-Karas of Orissa, cf. Tripathy (2002), 108. Panaheda stone inscription of Mandalika of AD 1059, under the Paramaras of Vagada, was engraved by Asaraja, the son of Sridhara of the *kayastha* family of Valabhi. H V Trivedi, 'Inscriptions of the Paramaras', *CII*, Vol. VII (ii), p. 285. It seems that the family had shifted from Valabhi but their roots continued to be recalled. The inscription refers to building of a Siva temple. The father and son find mention again (ibid., p. 289), but they figure as "writer"(s).
41. Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era', p. 470.
42. Cf. *Epigraphia Indica*, IV, pp. 101–24. Inscriptions also refer to *karmakaras*, which is explained as "chief artisan". Cf. D C Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Motilal Banarasi Dass, Delhi, 1965, pp. 373, 374.
43. Snigdha Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. I, Indian Council for Historical Research and Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1997, p.166.
44. In these instances none of those persons, whether artist or *kayastha*, *karanika*, etc., relinquished his original role or title while performing his work one way or the other. This indicates that due to the incursion of artists into state service and vice-versa, different roles got telescoped into one and the same office so that persons in such positions could conveniently switch roles according to the contingent requirements even as their traditional functions in their original station might have continued.
45. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, V (i), no. 194, p. 433; transl., p.187. The *Rajavallabha Mandanam* of Mandana is the only text which reserves the title of *sutradhara* for brahmana. No such proclivity is seen in the other *silpa* texts like the *Aparajita-prcha* (ch. 49.1–18; ch. 50.1–14) or the *Samarangana Sutradhara* (ch. 44) when they discuss the qualifications of the *sthapati*.
46. For a *bhogika* (the term used is *dharabhogika*) engraver of an eighth-century record, cf. Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, p. 148.
47. Cf. *Epigraphia Indica*, XXX, 248; XXXII, 304; Bhandarkar's List: Inscription No. 2048. There are many *simha*-ending names of engravers and *sutradharas*, e.g., Kelisimha, Karmasimha, etc. Cf. Bhandarkar's List, Inscription Nos. 578, 610. In vs 1330, Kelisimha is said to have engraved a record "with further help" of *silpi* Delhana. In another record of vs 1342 he finds mention as a *sutradhara*. Among the *simha*-ending names we have Dronasimha also. *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXI, 106, 316. There are other instances where the first generation names consisted of artists like Nahada and Vahada, while their following generation assumed names like Punasimha and Kumarasimha. Cf. Bhandarkar's List, Inscription Nos. 611, 491.
48. Cf. S Settar and G D Sontheimer, *Memorial Stones: A Study of their Origin, Significance and Variety*, New Delhi/Dharwar, 1982, p. 323. Also S Settar, *The Hoysala Temples*, Kalayatra Publications, Bangalore, 1992, pp. 91–92.
49. Nadlai Stone Inscription of Kelhana (Vikrama Samvat) 1228, in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XI (1911–12), pp. 47ff.
50. J N Agrawal, 2001, *Inscriptions of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kashmir and Adjoining Hilly Tracts*, Indian Council for Historical Research and Pratibha Prakashan, Delhi, 2001, p. 258.

51. Ibid., p. 225. Sometimes the contributions of the donors in a construction work are also mentioned with the share of each donor, in case it was a corporate gift. The Bhadund stone inscription of the time of Purnapala (c. AD 1040–60), of the Paramara dynasty of Candravati, refers to 22 brahmanas, members of a *gosthika*, who constructed a well possibly with the help of four artisans, namely, Dharevara, Deua, Devau and Lahampa. The inscription records the share of donation, both in words and figures, of each of those 22 contributors. Cf. Trivedi 'Inscriptions of the Paramaras', pp. 235–37.

Erratum

In the March–April 2011 issue of *Social Scientist* (Vol. 39, Nos. 3–4), the note at the top of page 88 in V. Rajesh's article is meant for the preceding article by Rashmi Sharma. The error is regretted.

The Adivasi Peasantry of Chotanagpur and the Nationalist Response (1920-1940s)

P K Shukla

The introduction of the Permanent Settlement (1793) began a process of deprivation among the *adivasi* peasantry of their land-holdings by the *dikus* (outsiders). Eviction from their lands forced a large section of the tribal peasantry of Chotanagpur to migrate to other parts of the country (Assam) in search of livelihood. Various legislative regulations (1859, 1869, 1879, 1903, 1908) enacted by the British authorities to check their eviction from land did not succeed in stopping the continuing loss of land of the tribal population. This led to tribal uprisings with the peasantry launching a series of revolts both against the colonial authorities and the *dikus*.¹ Though localized and sporadic, the underlying reasons behind these outbreaks were agrarian in character. Their grievances were often expressed in their folk songs. In one of the Birsite folk songs, they sang:

Afflicted with oppression of the zamindars, the misery of the people, the country is adrift. Fly to the bow, arrow and axe. Today for us death is better than life. Birsa Bhagwan is our leader. He has come down to us in the land ... Let us get ready with quiver, arrow and sword, we shall assemble on the Damodar hill. The father of the earth speaks up there. We shall not be afraid of monkeys, we shall not leave the zamindars, moneylenders and shopkeepers. They occupied our land. We shall not give up our *khuntkatti* rights. From leopards and snakes, we reclaimed our land. The happy land was seized by the enemies.²

In most such tribal folk songs, we see a strong reflection of this sense of deprivation. These songs are both contemporary and later improvisations; a few of them on Birsa are adaptations of old songs. It may be noted that different tribal communities fought together, and in some of the movements, other cultivators such as the *goalas*, the *kurmis*, the *koeries* and even displaced zamindars participated. They even knew how to hire pleaders for representing their grievances to the authorities. Thus the 'subaltern tradition' of protest was not altogether isolationist aiming at establishing just a tribal raj. The subaltern historians make a legitimate

critique of the dominant paradigms of writings on Indian nationalism, but they tend to subsume all tribal protests and identities into the framework of a single anti-colonial struggle.³ The purpose of writing history from below is to recover multiple voices of the oppressed, not to enforce a unified identity. Tribal studies show the diverse forms and aims of resistance, emphasising different ways in which popular or sectional grievances were conceived and expressed.⁴

The leaders of the Indian National Congress in the late nineteenth century expressed deep sympathy for the poverty-stricken people of India. While presiding over the second session of the Congress in 1886, Dadabhai Naoroji drew the attention of the British rulers towards the extreme poverty and sufferings of the Indian people, holding that India was sinking deeper and deeper into an abyss of destitution as a result of the policies of the foreign rulers.⁵ Sir Wedderburn, in his Presidential address dwelt on the economic problems of India and admitted that there had been steady material retrogression under British rule. While arguing for an "open inquiry" into the causes of the poverty of the Indian people, he also drew the attention of the foreign rulers to the plight of the "lower classes" of Bihar. In elaboration, he said that 40 per cent of the agricultural population was not only insufficiently fed, but they had little by way of clothing and housing.⁶ Though he admired the operation of the Permanent Settlement and its extension to other parts of India, he argued for fixity of tenure of land revenue assessment, and opined that cultivators should be permitted to enjoy the fruits of their labour. It may be noted that the *adivasi* peasantry suffered greatly because of the excessive land revenue imposed on their land, without adequate distinction being made between varying qualities of soil. The criticism of British rule by the moderate leaders of the Congress in the nineteenth century as regards the poverty of India prepared a solid ground for pursuing economic factors as an issue to fight against colonial rule. But they did not specifically raise the problems of the tribal populations whose conditions were perceptibly worse than those of the ordinary ranks of the peasantry.

The *adivasi* problem, as such, did not attract the attention of the nationalists till the 1920s. Gandhiji initially saw the tribal people through the prism of non-violence. Speaking in a different context, about what one could do for the tribal people of the North-West, Gandhiji said, "I would accept a challenge of conquering tribal areas but as a non-violent man I would not bribe them nor kill them: I would serve them." In contrast, he asked, "why have the Congressmen been unable to reach these tribes and make them proof against blandishments of those who would exploit their traditional violent tendencies, so-called or real". Gandhiji's appeal to the

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nationalists was to involve the tribals both in his *sarvodaya* and nationalist project.

When the Simon Commission was being welcomed by the rajas and zamindars in Bihar, in a demonstration against it led by local Congress leaders, Deoki Nandan Lal and P C Mitra, many Tana Bhagats from different parts of Chotanagpur joined in and raised black flags.⁸ Under the leadership of Dr R C Mitra, 150 Tana Bhagats left Ranchi for Calcutta, to attend the Congress session of 1928. Though the district of Santal Parganas was a non-regulation area, it was influenced by nationalist ideas and the spirit of social reform through the efforts of the prominent local Congress leader, Lambodar Mukherjee. Political Sufferers' Day was observed throughout Bihar and it was marked by protests and meetings. In the 'aboriginal' districts of Bihar also the tribals participated in these protests. They delivered speeches in their own dialects which the Santal Pargana police officers could not understand. Inspired by the nationalists' ideas of social reform, the Santals of Gumia, under the leadership of Bangam Manjhi of Borobera, sought to reform *adivasi* society. Thousands of his disciples began to wash their mouth and body daily, and they gave up meat and drink. They also abandoned the use of mill-made cloth and used *khadi*, which was one of the items on the Congress agenda. This movement attracted the attention of local Congress leaders Ram Narayan Sinha and Krishna Ballabh Sahay. Both of them were arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. The prosecution of these leaders gave impetus to the movement among the Santals.⁹ Meetings of Santals were organised at night and some of these meetings were attended by prominent leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad and Babu Mathura Prasad. About 210 Santals adopted the sacred thread, and it was also reported that the Santals were inducing others in their areas to join the movement.¹⁰

By 1930, there was considerable awakening in Chotanagpur and Manbhum. In Ranchi, on the occasion of the Independence Day celebration (26 January 1930), a procession of a large number of persons including many Tana Bhagats and students assembled for a meeting. The president of the local Congress Committee hoisted the National Flag amidst shouts of *Bande Matram* and *Bharat Mata ki Jai*. Most of the leaders of the Satyagraha of 1930 were non-*adivasi*, but some affluent Manjhis also participated in it. It may be noted that the tribes which responded to the call of Civil Disobedience included Santals, Oraons, Bhils and Gonds. Among them, the sections that responded most enthusiastically were those who had already taken to Vaishnavism. The leaders of these sects were Bhagats steeped in the Bhakti tradition, like Hindu peasants elsewhere, and they understood the idioms in which Gandhiji's message was couched. The Bhil

Bhagats, the Tana Bhagats among Oraons, the Sapha Hors among Santals and the Haribaba movement among the Hos (1930) found in the freedom movement an opportunity for the recovery of the tribal *raj* and of the land rights which the agrarian communities had lost.¹¹ Gandhiji became so popular among the *adivasis* that the Birsites began to recite a *bhajan* in his tribute: "O Mother, like the rising sun Gandhi was born, like the rising moon Birsa has come up. O Mother, Gandhi was born for *Swaraj*, Birsa had come up to put the Mundas on their fee."¹² But these Bhagats were a minority among the *adivasis*. Gandhiji's 1934 tour of Chatra, Hazaribagh, Gumia, Barmo, Jharia, Jamshedpur and Chakradharpur drew an encouraging response from the *adivasis*, who saw him as an "incarnation of God". Occasionally there was a dangerous rush of crowds who hoped to touch his feet and gain his blessings.¹³ They imagined that when *Swaraj* came, they would not have to pay rent, and that they would get back all the land they had lost to outsiders. They declared that Gandhi raj would replace British raj and that the bullets of government soldiers would become harmless like water. Among the Hos, one Duka Ho, called Hari Baba, in 1930 proclaimed himself as one of the most intimate disciples of Gandhi. Gandhiji was celebrated with dancing and feasts, and by words: "The British are no more; Victory to Gandhi Mahto!" The movement grew into a massive one against village spirits and witchcraft before it subsided with the arrest of Hari Baba and his colleagues.¹⁴ But one wonders for how long the invocation of *Ramnam*, faith in the Hindu religion, *khaddar* and 'uplift' work, as advised by Gandhiji, would have satisfied the *adivasis'* desire for restoration of their land rights.

One of the Congress leaders, Srimati Devi, worked among the Tana Bhagats in Mander and Kuru. Several processions with Congress flags were organised and picketing attempted. Jail sentences ranging from one to two years were awarded to check the agitation. Similar sentences were awarded to nine Tanas for having participated in a protest led by Condala Bhagat against food shortage. An announcement was made by the Tana Bhagats to the effect that if the infant heir of the Chotanagpur raja died, they would become free-hold tenants and pay only cess to the government. This was reflective of the change in attitude among the Bhagats. Gandhiji's visit to Ranchi in 1934 attracted 400 Tana Bhagats from Ranchi and Palamu. They expected that Gandhiji would help them get their rents reduced, but he only spoke of inter-dining with Harijans. The Bhagats stated that since their fathers had not eaten with Harijans, they would not do so. The district administration was almost jubilant that Gandhiji's visit had "done good in dashing the mounting hopes of the rump of the Tana Bhagat movement".¹⁵ Thereafter, the Ranchi Congressmen expressed their anxiety about being able to once again secure the allegiance of the Tana Bhagats. The Tana

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Bhagats, who comprised the bulk of the Congress members, had another disappointment when the Provincial Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee (PCKEC) toured the district in 1936. Although K B Sahay argued in favour of the Tana Bhagats to withhold rent and *begar* (forced labour) in protest against the enhanced rent, the Committee made it very clear to them that rents were to be paid as usual. The argument given by the Committee was that since the Civil Disobedience Movement had been withdrawn, they must abide by the Congress decision. This sounds curious since non-payment of rent had not been part of the Provincial Congress programme. The Tana Bhagats, however, told the Committee that they were living on wild fruits and roots, and did not have the means to pay rent.¹⁶ K B Sahay was keen to take up the cause of the tribals as a depressed class in 1933, but it was decided that the *adivasi* peasantry should be left to themselves to follow the reformatory programme under the guidance of A V Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa.

Gandhiji's visit to Bermo and Gumia attracted many Santals, both men and women, and fears of a Congress-sponsored revival of the Santal movement briefly reappeared in February 1935, when a resolution was passed that the government would be requested to remit rents in view of the low agricultural prices. But there was no evidence of any follow-up action on the resolution. The Provincial Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee (PCKEC) visited Hazaribagh in 1936 and Rajendra Prasad delivered a speech before the Santal Manghis who expected some relief, but contrary to their expectations, they were asked to not make free use of forests including the ones reserved for fuel and fruit. At Hazaribagh, Ram Narayan Singh stated that the Congress was not in a position to remove the grievances of the *kisans*. It was admitted by the PCKEC that all those who attended the assembly of 3,000 at the Ramgarh session of the Congress had raised their hands to indicate their grievances against the reservation of forests by the British government.¹⁷ It was a period of economic depression when the ordinary *raiya*s were hard-pressed. It was only in Palamau, among the Chotanagpur districts, that the Congress leaders came close to taking up agrarian questions. Dissatisfied with the attitude of the Congress, the Kisan Sabha passed a resolution in early 1936 inviting a visit by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

Sahajanand's visit to Palamau caused much anxiety to the government, which contemplated restraining him in the Ranka and Deogarh estates, although his enquiry in these areas was against *amla* oppression and disputes over forest rights.¹⁸ He decided to acquaint himself with the problems of the *adivasi* peasantry when he was in Hazaribagh Central Jail. His eyewitness account recorded in the 1940s by and large tallied with the grievances of the tribals in the nineteenth century. He wanted to mobilise

the *kisans* and the agricultural labourers on agrarian issues as a part of the freedom struggle. The demands raised included the following: zamindars' interference in the *kisans*' cultivation of land should be stopped; there should not be any restriction on the *kisans*' use of jungle products such as *mahua* flowers, *palas*, *kusum* and *ber* trees; they should not be forced to pay excessive land revenue to the zamindars; irrigation facilities should be provided to them by the zamindars; no arrears of rent could be realised unless and until the *kisans* got foodgrains; bonded labour such as *sevakai* and *kamauti* should be abolished; the fraudulent methods adopted by *vakils* and *mukhtars* should be stopped; and there should be one Tenancy Act for all the districts of Chotanagpur.¹⁹ Sahajanand, in fact, made no distinction between the peasants and the agricultural labourers. He pointed out how a cultivator became an agricultural labourer after he lost the land he possessed. He also made some theoretical points regarding the relationship between small peasants and landless agricultural labourers. He considered small peasants to be the backbone of the Kisan Sabha.

The first three decades of the twentieth century had witnessed no rent movement in any form in almost all the Chotanagpur districts. There was deep resentment against the transformed agrarian structure. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, whenever an occasion arose the Congress leaders had criticised the administrative set-up of the Santal Parganas, but they did not take up any resolution favouring the restoration of *adivasis*' rights to the lands they had lost. The Congress's position was somewhat ambivalent on this issue. They wanted to mobilise the *adivasi* peasantry against colonial rule but, at the same time, they were not hostile to the landlords. The result was that in 1936, the Parganaits in the Damin area asked the *adivasis* not to vote for the Congress candidates in the forthcoming elections of 1937 because the assurances given to them had not been taken up. Krishna Sinha, the premier of Bihar, assured the Paharias and the Santals that their deplorable condition would improve when Congressmen were returned to the Assembly. Cautiously qualifying the ritualistic mention of the Russian Revolution, he asked his audience not to go as far as the Russians but simply vote for the Congress.²⁰

In such a situation, the government and the zamindars joined hands to check the growing influence of the Kisan Sabha. Although Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Bihar in 1937 aroused enthusiasm among the people of the non-tribal areas, Rajendra Prasad's election meetings were disturbed in Mandu and Ramgarh. It was reported that the *adivasis* were armed with funnels and shouting slogans at the top of their voice. There were noisy scenes and Rajendra Prasad was abused. Although not more than twelve or fifteen people were involved in shouting such abuses, they called him a *chor* (thief), a jackal, etc.²¹ The fact was that Rajendra Prasad had had some

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reservations about the Sardars and Parganaits of Santal Parganas being set up as candidates for the 1937 election, on the ground that they were in receipt of a stipend in consideration of functions relating to revenue matters. But the then Chief Secretary of Bihar clarified that they were not governed by the Government Servants' Conduct Rules. With the support of the zamindars and the landlords, the result of the election was a sweeping victory for the Congress Party. Out of the total 152 seats in the Assembly, the Congress captured 98 seats. The *adivasi* seats, with a few exceptions, were also obtained by the Congress. But not a single *adivasi* was given a position in the government. Influenced by the Karachi Congress's resolution on agrarian issues (1931), the Congress Working Committee (1937) laid down that the programme as enunciated in the Election Manifesto, particularly on the agrarian issue, should be taken up by the different provincial ministries. The agrarian programme included a substantial reduction in rent and revenue, fixity of tenure, relief from the burden of rural debt, and relief from arrears of rent and revenue. Some remedial and constructive measures, such as abolition of illegal exactions (*abwabs*), opening branches of the All India Spinners' Association in Manbhum and Santal Parganas, and the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, were taken up by the ministry. But these measures were not enough to satisfy the expectations of the *adivasi* peasantry. In the agricultural and industrial sectors there was an irresistible urge for more thoroughgoing change. Since the agrarian issue was not a priority during the first ministry, the Santals and other *kisans* of Hazaribagh forcibly started cutting wood in the jungles of the Parasnath hills, which were purchased by the zamindars and Jain businessmen.

Though the Kisan Sabha with Swami Sahajanand Saraswati as its leader had a relatively limited influence in Jharkhand during the heyday of the peasant movement in Gangetic Bihar, there were notable exceptions. Sahajanand presided over the Singhbhum District Kisan Conference at Ghatshila in 1939. This marked the beginning of his growing sensitivity towards the problems of the tribal peasantry. He made a fundamental point at the conference about the nature of peasant activism. He felt that the tribal peasants were aware of their social and economic conditions, and that they did not require or did not need to depend on outside "instigators" to tell them that they were being exploited. He wanted the peasants to function independently of outside agents of mobilization.²² But the reality was that the nationalist leaders, consciously or unconsciously, could not help the tribal peasants to organize themselves. The fact was that in the Chotanagpur region the Congress was dominated by a few rich landlords, and it therefore tended to overlook the interests of the *adivasis*.

The activities of the Chotanagpur Improvement Society (1920), also

known as Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj, remained confined to the emerging urban tribal middle class. It advocated unity of action among the Christian missions, such as the German Anglican Mission and the Anglican Lutheran, for political purposes. It was led by educated tribals who sought to secure employment and reservation in the services and legislative bodies, for themselves. It sought to spread its activities to the villages but remained essentially an urban movement, and did not take up any of the burning agrarian issues.

The subsequent phase, from 1938 to 1947, saw the rise of a militant movement under the influence of the Adivasi Mahasabha with Jaipal Singh as its president. After their failure in the 1937 election, the Christian and non-Christian tribals came close to each other. The Chotanagpur Improvement Society merged with the Adivasi Sabha. The latter represented an advance on the earlier movement and commanded a wider political base. The other sources of influences on the Mahasabha were the Bihari-Bengali controversy and Muslim League politics. The Bengalis felt that their interests in Bihar were not safe, and that therefore they could combine with the tribals to form a separate state.²³ At the initiative of the Bihar Ministry, the Santal Parganas Inquiry Committee (1938) was constituted to inquire into the functioning of the administration. Consisting of nine members with R E Russell as chairman, it recommended that steps be taken to protect castes and tribes other than the *dikus*. The Committee found that in many places the *mahajans* and *dikus* had illegally grabbed the lands of the 'aboriginals'. It recommended that no right of sale should be given to any class of *raiyats*. But the improvements and changes recommended by the Committee were not implemented. One of its members, Maheshwar Prasad Jha (pleader of Deogarh), opposed the recommendation to protect *benamidars*.²⁴ Similarly the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) was amended to give some relief to the *adivasi* peasantry. It was recommended that the Mundas in possession of the land should be protected and that the Mundari-Khuntkatti system should be deemed legal. The aim of the Act was to amend laws and codify them according to custom and usage. But when the Act came into force there were only 156 villages which were registered as under Mundari-Khuntkatti rights. It was also found that out of 3,614 square miles of cultivated land, only 405 square miles of land were registered. The Muslim League, which was very active during the mid-1940s, proposed the formation of a corridor passing through the tribal areas to link East and West Pakistan. The League sympathised with the tribals and also gave financial support to the Adivasi Mahasabha. Both the Samaj and the Mahasabha were 'loyalists', although the latter remained outside the mainstream of nationalist politics. Its president, Jaipal Singh, supported the British war effort to which the

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Congress was opposed. He played a personal role in recruiting tribals for the British Indian army. This shows that the educated urban *adivasi* had no concern either for the freedom movement or for the agrarian issues for which the mass of the tribal peasantry had been fighting since long. It may be noted that Jaipal Singh claimed that he was the natural leader of the *adivasis* and, as such, he felt it was his duty to see that the *adivasis* worked for their own advancement.²⁶ But he did not raise issues like forcible eviction of land, and enhancement of rent and usury, to which the *adivasi* peasants were subjected.

The struggle for freedom influenced not only the tribes in Central India, but also the *adivasi* peasantry in Chotanagpur. However, their participation was based on certain economic demands. Jawaharlal Nehru's perception of the tribal population was different. He referred to the anthropological approach in which tribals had been treated as "museum specimens", and for examination and analysis. He differed with this approach and said that everybody is an anthropological specimen to a greater or lesser degree. According to him the tribals were democratic, good-hearted and had a strong sense of oneness. At the same time, he cautioned that "unscrupulous people" from outside should not be allowed to take possession of the forests and interfere with them in any way except with the consent and goodwill of the tribals.²⁷ But Nehru's voice in this matter, as in many other matters, has for long been a lonely one.

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Notes

1. The Chuar rebellion (1767), the Dalbium rebellion (1769–74), the Tilka Manjhi War (1780–85), the Paharia revolt (1788–91), the Second Chuar rebellion (1798–99), Nayak Hangama (1806–16), the Kol Insurrection (1831–32), the Karoo Manjhi movement (1865), the Dubia Gossain movement (1870–1880s) and the Birsa Munda movement (1874–1901).
2. K S Singh, *Birsa Munda and His Movements (1874–1901): A Study of a Millenarian Movement in Chotanagpur*, Delhi, 1983, p. 279.
3. Ranajit Guha, 'Introduction', in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 1983.
4. Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination: Peasants, Tribals and Nationalism in Colonial Orissa*, New Delhi, 1993.
5. Dadabhai Naoroji's Presidential Address, Second Session of the Indian National Congress, 1886, in A M Zaidi and S G Zaid (eds.), *Congress Presidential Addresses*, Vol. I: 1885–1900, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 136–37.

6. Presidential Address, Fifth Session of Indian National Congress (1889), Bombay, in *ibid.*, pp. 371-72.
7. D G Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. 8, 1961, p. 28, quoted by K S Singh in 'Mahatma Gandhi and the Adivasi', *Man in India: Quarterly Anthropological Journal*, edited by Nirmal Kumar Bose, Vol. 50, No. 1, January-March 1970.
8. Police Report, quoted in K K Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol. II: 1929-41, Patna, p. 8.
9. *The Searchlight*, 16 February 1930.
10. A note on the Santal Movement in Hazaribagh by R P Wilson, S.P., Hazaribagh, quoted in K K Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol. II, p. 64.
11. K S Singh, 'Tribal Sub-Movements, 1920-1947', in B R Nanda (ed.), *Essays in Modern India History*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 157.
12. K S Singh, *Birsa Munda and His Movement*, p. 285.
13. Political Department, special section, K W (DIG-CID), Hazaribagh, 30 April 1934, quoted in Papiya Ghosh, *The Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar (1930-1934)*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 216.
14. K S Singh, 'The Hari Baba Movement in Chotanagpur 1931-32', *Journal of Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XLIX, Parts I and IV, January-December 1963, quoted in *Man in India*, Vol. 50, No. 1, January-March 1970, p. 8.
15. Police Department, Special Section, Confidential, No. 104C, Ranchi, 4 May 1934.
16. Papiya Ghosh, *The Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar*, p. 218.
17. *Rajendra Prasad Papers*, col. No. 1, File No. VII.
18. Police Department, Special Section, K W, 14, Chotanagpur, 1934.
19. Walter Hauser (ed.), *Swami Sahajanand and the Peasants of Jharkhand: A View from 1941*, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 198-203.
20. Political Department, 6 (III), 16 November 1936, Confidential, No. 627, quoted in Papiya Ghosh, *The Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar*, p. 223.
21. Rajendra Prasad's letter dated 23.1.1937 to Jimut, the Chief Secretary of Bihar, in *Dr Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. I: 1934-38, edited by Valmiki Chaudhary, New Delhi, 1984, p. 20.
22. Hauser (ed.), *Swami Sahajanand and the Peasants of Jharkhand*, pp. 198-203.
23. K S Singh, 'From Ethnicity to Regionalism: A Study in Tribal Politics and Movements in Chotanagpur from 1900 to 1975', in S C Malik (ed.), *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, Simla, 1977, p. 322.
24. *Report of the Santal Parganas Enquiry Committee*, Patna, 1938, Clauses 127, 128 and 131, pp. 48-51.
25. Sanjukta Das Gupta, 'Rethinking Adivasi Identity: The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) and its aftermath among the Hos of Singhbhum', in Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Adivasis in Colonial India: Survival, Resistance and Negotiation*, New Delhi, 2011, p. 86.
26. Letter No. 3 dated 16 January 1939 from Jaipal Singh to Rajendra Prasad, in *Dr Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. III, New Delhi, 1984, p. 4.
27. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Tribal Folk', in *Adivasi*, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1955, p. 8. Also see S C Dubey, 'Nehru and Tribal India', *Secular Democracy*, Vol. X, Nos. XXI-XXII (Nehru Number), 1976, pp. 183-84.

Oslo Accords

The Genesis and Consequences for Palestine

Shamir Hassan

The Intifaada, or the uprising of the Palestinian people against Israel taking the form of absolute civil disobedience, which began in December 1987, was the single decisive event that led to the agreement at Oslo between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel. Many other factors and events both before and after played significant roles, but it was the Intifaada that tipped the scales in the direction that finally brought about the Oslo Accords.

Genesis

The process that brought the Palestinians and Israel to meet at Oslo can be traced as far back as the early 1970s when a debate was opened within the PLO over the future status of areas of Palestine that could be liberated and those which would remain in the possession of Israel. The idea of constituting a Palestinian state limited to the West Bank and Gaza, a "mini state" next to the state of Israel, namely a two-state solution, was proposed by some powers, including the Soviet Union.¹ After Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the resultant serious setback to the PLO there, this became a subject of heated debate within the organisation, with some advocating the recognition of Israel and the two-state solution – such as Said Hamami and Issam Sartawi, assassinated for advocating these views. Serious dissensions developed within the PLO during the course of the war in Lebanon. Not only was Arafat's authority persistently challenged within the ranks of the PLO by the more militant group, but there was also a take-over attempt by those who were supported by Syria. The war in Lebanon convinced many others that the Palestinian armed struggle could not stand up to the Israeli war machine. Moreover, neither the Arab states nor the Soviet Union were in a position to support them militarily. Indeed by 1988 Gorbachev was in power in the Soviet Union with an entirely new, "balanced" policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict edging toward renewed relations with Israel and urging Arafat to do the same.²

Yasser Arafat had apparently been moving in this direction, as evidenced by his attempted rapprochement with Jordan and his

overtures to the United States in late 1984 and early 1985.³ The Americans demanded from the PLO an acceptance of UNSC Resolution 242 along with explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist. They also demanded renunciation of terror and violence as another condition. These three conditions were held to be the prerequisites for opening any US-PLO dialogue. Simultaneously, a raging Intifaada constituted pressure from below for both Israel and the US. It demonstrated the precarious and untenable nature of Israel's occupation of Palestine; but the harsh conditions of life it imposed on the Palestinian population made it difficult for the PLO to continue the struggle. Disillusionment with Arab and Soviet assistance, and despair from within the Occupied Territories brought the PLO's long debate to a denouement. The Palestine National Council, in November 1988, passed a political resolution accepting UNSC Resolution 242 and condemning any resort to terrorism. This was followed by a speech from Yasser Arafat to the United Nations General Assembly and a subsequent press conference in Geneva explicitly recognising Israel's right to exist in peace and security, and denouncing all forms of terrorism.⁴

As a result of the shift in the Palestinian position, the PLO was in a fairly weakened position in 1993. The first Intifaada had been launched at the initiative of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and not the PLO leadership based at Tunis.⁵ This in turn signalled a weakening of the PLO within Palestinian politics, which was now being shaped by local Palestinians and especially the Hamas. The PLO lost further in the eyes of the local Palestinians when it entered into negotiations with the US at the end of 1988. On the other hand, the PLO's diplomatic and financial position weakened when Arafat supported Saddam Hussain in the Gulf War of 1991, in line with the strong public support in Palestine for Saddam. This support to Saddam alienated the US and Arafat's so-called 'moderate' Arab allies. With the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union soon after, the PLO had no serious alternative source of support left internationally. Against this background, the PLO had a clear interest in entering into negotiations.⁶

Israel, initially hesitant, took a bit longer to reach the point of readiness in recognising the PLO and a compromise solution. Israeli society and polity had long been divided over the future of the Occupied Territories. The Labour Party government there advocated "Land for Peace" in relation to its Arab neighbours, but explicitly rejected both the PLO and the idea of a Palestinian state, while the right-wing governments led by Likud along with smaller ultra-religious parties sought to plant settlers in the Occupied Territories, often for religious as well as nationalist reasons, in accordance with Zionist aspirations. Yet opinion polls and surveys over the years from 1967 to the early 1990s indicated a gradual shift in public

opinion in the direction of willingness to compromise over the Occupied Territories, and (though to a much lesser degree) to accept the idea of a Palestinian state. A graph of public opinion indicated a gradual shift with a sharp “jump” in this direction at the time of the Intifaada. Whereas prior to its outbreak a majority of Israelis preferred the “status quo” with regard to the Occupied Territories, this percentage subsequently dropped significantly.⁷ Many in Israel had come to the realisation during the Intifaada that the policy of “status quo” was not sustainable and that the situation created by the uprising was putting too great a strain on the Israeli economy. The argument put forward by the Leftists was gaining greater credence, namely, that one could not maintain an occupation and deny rights to over three-and-a-half million Palestinians, and expect them to accept the situation quietly and indefinitely. The Occupied Territories were now becoming a threat to Israelis’ personal security rather than just to Israel’s security.⁸

There are many other factors one can point to in terms of the shift in Israeli policy. First, the public reaction to the Intifaada and the Gulf War led key figures among Israeli politicians, including Rabin, to conclude that Israelis were increasingly fatigued by the ongoing conflict. As a result Israel’s national power was eroding and this in turn perhaps necessitated a more forthcoming approach in peace negotiations.⁹ Second, the increased threat of radical states on the periphery, Iran and Iraq, possibly using non-conventional weapons pushed Israel towards compromise. Third, with the end of the cold war, Israel’s value as a “strategic asset” to the US was obviously eroded, and this too pushed it towards a less intransigent position.

The change in public opinion within Israel brought the Labour Party and Rabin back to power in the 1992 elections. Rabin may have been motivated by more than public opinion when he spoke of opening a “window of opportunity”. This window was opening as a result of the change taking place in the world: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the sole super power in a “new world order”. The United States, in the wake of the Gulf War and in part as a result of Arab participation in the anti-Iraq coalition, sought, in her own interest, to appear less committed to the song of “Israel, right or wrong”. Clearly, this shift in the balance of power was among the most powerful factors that pushed Israeli policy towards some semblance of a compromise. Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir was persuaded to conduct negotiations with the Palestinians in the Madrid Conference.¹⁰

The Oslo Accords

The “Oslo Accords” actually consisted of a series of agreements within the overall category of “Interim Arrangements” for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip until the conclusion of an agreement on the final status of these

territories. It was the very interim nature of these agreements that led to their undoing. The underlying concept was that the two sides were not yet ready for a full peace agreement and, therefore, an interim period was needed during which to build mutual trust. However, this basic concept was beset with a number of question marks. There was a large amount of optimism on the Palestinian side that peace had been reached. This led to expectations of changes on the ground, when in fact peace had not been negotiated and hence the course of events could not match expectations.¹¹ Leaving the final status of the Occupied Territories for future negotiations meant that the goal was undefined, a matter of particular importance to the Palestinians for there was no mention of what the end result would be for them. Although the interim period was to be limited in time to five years, this left enough chance for the road to final settlements being blocked.

The following are the agreements that made up what is known as the "Oslo Accords".

1. Letters of Mutual Recognition between Israel and the PLO – 9 and 10 September 1993
2. Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements ("Oslo-I") – 13 September 1993
3. [Paris] Protocol on Economic Relations – 29 April 1994
4. Agreement on Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area ("Cairo Agreement") – 4 May 1994
5. Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities – 29 August 1994 (additional agreement, 28 August 1995)
6. Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip ("Oslo-II") – 28 September 1995
7. Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron – 15 January 1996
8. Wye River Memorandum – 23 October 1998
9. Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum – 4 September 1999.

Letters of Mutual Recognition

These are the most important of all the documents since they represented a historic breakthrough. They also constituted the most irreversible move in the whole process.

In this mutual recognition, Rabin had made no commitment beyond recognition. This was a reflection of the asymmetry and weakened position of the PLO, a liberation movement facing a state that had the full backing of the only super power, one that had already in the past dictated the only terms acceptable to Israel for dealing with the PLO.¹²

Oslo-I was far from a peace agreement but rather a "Declaration of Principles" (DOP), providing for a framework of negotiations.¹³ The title

contained the words "Self-Government Arrangements", reminiscent of the various plans for Palestinian autonomy that had been raised by Israel. DOP resembled the autonomy plan proposed by Menachem Begin in the Camp David talks with Egypt in 1978. The new, somewhat ambiguous recognition of the two 'sides' mutual "legitimate and political rights" seemed to be due to an effort to avoid the term "national rights".

Oslo-II contained an Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This agreement was finally signed on 28 September 1995. The Interim Agreement, like all the Oslo documents before it, stipulated that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip constituted one territorial unit with the exclusion of Jerusalem, but the lines within these areas had yet to be drawn. For example, during the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military was evacuated, but Israeli settlements and settlers remained. Moreover, Israel was to retain free use of the roads for its military and civilians, along with responsibility for external security around the evacuated areas in the Gaza Strip and also Jericho. There was intentional ambiguity regarding the withdrawal, yet the provisions for security were detailed and exhaustive. All external security was to remain in the hands of Israel.

For a majority of Israelis, support for the peace process was not about Palestinian rights, but about security and the need to protect Israel's identity as a Jewish state.¹⁴ Only in 1988 did a majority of Israeli Jews begin to accept that the Palestinians had a legitimate right to statehood. Before that many Israelis were insensitive to the fact that continued Jewish settlements led Palestinians to fear that they would not get a viable contiguous state but only a series of mini-Bantustans. This fear was perfectly justified regarding the intentions of the Israeli ruling circles, since Rabin and Barak showed no willingness to stop settlements.

The Left in Palestine, mainly consisting of the PFPL and the DFLP, while supporting a peace process with Israel, opposed the Oslo Accords because of the absence of any promise or even mention of Palestinian statehood. In their thinking Israel offered only autonomy, thereby freeing itself of the economic burden of the Palestinian population, while granting itself overall control and keeping all the Jewish settlements with West Bank and Gaza.

The Islamist groups rejected the peace process altogether and vehemently opposed the Oslo Accords. On the Israeli side, opposition came from the right-wing parties and all the religious parties. The vote in their favour in the Knesset or the Israeli Parliament obtained a majority of only 1 (61), with 50 opposed including Ariel Sharon, and 8 abstentions, including Ehud Barak, then a Labour Minister. The West Bank settlers were the most vehement in their opposition, focusing their hysterical campaign against Rabin when they dubbed him a traitor.

There were violations of the agreements by the Palestinians as well. The most serious problem emanating from the Palestinian side was the increase in terror attacks inside Israel as well as in the Occupied Territories. Arafat and the Palestinians were blamed for laxity. This resulted in a strengthening of the opponents of the peace process among the Israeli public, egged on by the extremists among them, and whittled away popular support for Oslo. Extremist hysteria finally erupted into the assassination of Rabin by Yigol Amir, a religious Jewish student, at the end of a massive peace rally in Tel Aviv in support of Oslo on 4 November 1995, just two months after the signing of the Interim Agreement.

Consequences

In sharp contrast to those faithful to the peace process launched at Oslo, its opponents consider that it is the faulty structure of the agreements that determined the manner of its implementation. In other words, an agreement repeatedly violated with impunity is first and foremost a bad one.¹⁵

Edward Said consistently argued that Oslo's fatal flaw was that it is neither an instrument of decolonisation nor a mechanism to implement UN resolutions relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather, it was a framework aimed at changing the basis of Israeli control over the Occupied Territories in order to perpetuate that control. As such, the process was structurally incapable of producing a viable settlement and must ultimately result in further conflict.¹⁶

One can objectively argue that the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) forged in Oslo is demonstratively not based upon reciprocal recognition of equal or comparable rights. Israel had demanded the lion's share in all disputed points, including Palestinian concessions in the letters of unconditional recognition immediately preceding Oslo. The relevant agreements never refer to the West Bank and Gaza Strip as "Occupied". They do not commit Israel to desist from illegal activities such as settlements designed to consolidate Israeli rule, in contravention of international law. There was also no palpable effort to resolve the core issues that collectively define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, namely borders, refugees and Jerusalem. There are no clear-cut guidelines for further steps towards a two-state solution. Instead, the Palestinians' rights are brushed under the carpet as "Final status issues", postponed for negotiation at the very end of the process.

Thus the imbalance of power inherent in the Oslo Accord determined its disastrous outcome. Through it, an ascendant Israel forged a functional partnership with a weakened and exhausted PLO in which the former would retain possession of strategic assets in the West Bank and Gaza

(land, water, borders, Jerusalem), and infinite extension into the West Bank as more settlements were established. According to this arrangement the PLO would assume formal responsibility for the natives in the form of a recognised Palestinian entity, but Israel could raid or occupy any part held by the Palestinian Authority. It is a process by which Israel's security interests reign supreme, with all else, including individual and collective Palestinian rights, subordinated.¹⁷ It is a process that leads to separation within the Occupied Territories under continued Israeli hegemony, as opposed to the partition of Palestine through a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In doing so, it formalises arrangements tantamount to apartheid with guaranteed overall White control.¹⁸

Oslo's studied neglect of the requirements for peace and Israel's deliberate violations of international law have paved the way for further conflict. The facts on the ground certainly bear out such an interpretation. Between September 1993 and 2000, the total Jewish settler population (excluding Jerusalem and its environs) increased from 110,000 to 195,000, a staggering 77 per cent. In absolute terms, the annual rate of implantation of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip averaged 4,200 between 1967 and 1993, 9,600 between 1986 and 1996, and more than 12,000 between 1994 and 2000.¹⁹ Land expropriations have also continued apace, amounting to 40,178 *dunams* (1 *dunam* = 0.25 acre) in 1999 alone.²⁰ So insatiable has been Israel's appetite for Palestinian land since 1993 that one can say that Oslo's actual achievement was to broker the end of Arab occupation of Judea and Samaria.

The marketing of Oslo to the Palestinian public by the PLO and the west in 1993 to 1994 had emphasised the economic prosperity it would bring. Yet, for more than a decade, more Palestinians were impoverished than they were on the eve of the process. According to the World Bank, Yemen is now "the only country in the Middle East and North African region that has a lower average income than the WBG [West Bank and Gaza strip]".²¹ Israel's systematic restrictions on labour flows, trade and movement, very much in excess of what they were prior to 1993, ensured that the pipedream of a Palestinian "Singapore of the Middle East", trumpeted so often following the handshake at the White House, gave way to the reality of a Palestinian "Soweto on the Mediterranean". Whether such an unnatural state of affairs can last is another question.

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Notes

1. Galia Golan, *Israel and Palestine: Peace Plans from Oslo to Disengagement*, USA, 2007, p. 9.
2. See Galia Golan, *Moscow and the Middle East: New Thinking on Regional Conflict*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1992.
3. V.3: the King Hussein-Yasser Arafat Agreement of February 1985.
4. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and Search for State*, Washington, 1999, p. 624.
5. Ehud Yaari and Ze'ev Schiff, *Intifaada*, New York, 1990; Ephraim Inbar, 'Arab-Israeli Coexistence: Causes, Achievements and Limitations', *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 6, Nos. 3-4, Summer 2000, pp. 256-70. As cited in Jonathan Reynold, 'The Failure of the Oslo Process: Inherently Flawed or Flawed Implementation?', Middle East Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, at <http://www.hesacenter.org>.
6. Barry Rubin, *Revolution until Victory?*, New York, 1990; Barry Rubin and Judith Colp-Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, Oxford, 2003.
7. Galia Golan, 'Israel and Palestinian Statehood', in Winston Van Horn (ed.), *Global Convulsions: Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism at the End of the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1997, pp. 169-88.
8. Galia Golan, *Israel and Palestine: Peace Plans from Oslo to Disengagement*, p. 10.
9. Herbert Kelman, 'The Political Psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: How can we overcome the Barriers to a Negotiated Solution', *Political Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 1987, pp. 347-63.
10. Yitzak Shamir, quoted in *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 November 1991, p. 1. As cited in Jonathan Reynold, 'The Failure of the Oslo Process'.
12. In 1975 Henry Kissinger had promised Israel not to open any dialogue with the PLO unless it recognised Israel's right to exist.
13. It was similar to the concept of a framework of principles worked out before a final agreement, for example, between Egypt and Israel in 1978.
14. Jacob Shamir and Michal Shamir, *The Dynamics of Israeli Opinion on Peace and the Territories*, Tel Aviv, 1993.
15. Mouin Rabbani, 'Rocks and Rockets: Oslo's Inevitable Conclusion', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXX, No. 3, Spring 2001, pp. 65-81.
16. Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, New York, 1988. Also, 'Palestinians under Siege', *London Review of Books*, 22, no. 24, December 2000, pp. 9-14.
17. Norman G. Finkelstein, 'Securing Occupation', in Mouin Rabbani, 'Rocks and Rockets', p. 74.
18. The Dutch/Afrikaans word literally means separateness; the exact English rendering could be 'apart-hood'!
19. Figures provided in *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, Foundation for Middle East Peace, as cited by Said in 'Palestinians under Siege', p. 9; and Raseem Khamaisi, 'Settling the Land: A Pattern of Domination', *Palestine Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol. 7, Nos. 3-4, 2001, p. 89.
20. Mouin Rabbani, 'Rocks and Rockets', p. 75.
21. Ibid.

Chronicling Calcutta's Left Trajectory, and Muzaffar Ahmad Within

Suchetana Chattopadhyay, *An Early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta 1913–1929*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2011, HB, xiv+306 pages, Rs 600

The first question that occurs to one while reading this deeply engaging book is, what if Muzaffar Ahmad was a person in today's world and times? How would one locate someone like him in the India of today, which has come nearly full circle from independence of one kind to dependence of another, stuck as badly as it was once, within a world political economy driven by market and a different format of global power-play? For, as you read the life and a short period (1913–1929) within the life of this Communist you cannot but wonder about near-similar circumstances of a new kind of imperialist hegemony (that of the money market) and resistance (of varied forms) as a larger canvas in our country.

Suchetana Chattopadhyay's *An Early Communist* is not merely about Muzaffar Ahmad, in the tradition of a typical biography, but also about Calcutta and its developments in the context of colonialism, within which Muzaffar was to find, and make, his space and political identity. From the time of Muzaffar's arrival in Calcutta, a space was being created by political circumstance of anti-colonial movements.

It is not a historical biography per se; you sense a mind that is engaging with the sights and corners of Calcutta through minute observations, which are rare in such works, but important, because it is also the larger landscape, the rumblings of a city, the context of one's surroundings, the political, social, economic environment, that make a person who he/she becomes, apart from his/her own individual intensity of engagement with these larger contexts. The making of Muzaffar Ahmad is the central theme running through the book, and it is fascinating to travel through the life of this man, from his modest background to becoming a Communist in Calcutta, watched ever so closely by the British Intelligence. So, this book is about Muzaffar Ahmad *in* Calcutta as much as it is about Muzaffar Ahmad, *a* Communist.

It is the attempt to understand the making of Muzaffar Ahmad, than the man himself, that makes the book intensely engaging; and this is the author's strong point since Calcutta, or present-day Kolkata, is also her own city. Hence the intensity of

observation is at once personal and distant, through the eyes of a historian. The monochrome photographs, of spots in present-day Kolkata where a certain history was lived, present their own sense of continuity and break from the traditions that exemplified the trajectory of the movements, including the Communist, against colonialism. 1913 to 1929, the period selected for study in the book, is a period in Calcutta's life as a colonial metropolis as well as in the life of Muzaffar, and the point of convergence seems to be the tumultuous, varied expression of mass movements against colonial rule. The character of the city is essentially the character of its political and social life, of the groups that stood against the dominant state and its might. Mass unrest was the backdrop against which people like Muzaffar plunged into political activity. The book covers a remarkably vast canvas of seemingly disconnected pockets of resistance in Calcutta which led Muzaffar Ahmad into the Communist fold.

From the time of Muzaffar's arrival in Calcutta, the book takes us on a long journey through the lanes and corners of Calcutta which were to house the much-dreaded Communists/'Bolsheviks'. There is also an explanation, hinted at in the book, of an identity (Muslim) based group becoming a political one in these circumstances.

During the war, arrests of Indian revolutionaries, mainly from Bengali Hindu middle class background, and of pan-Islamists who opposed and tried to subvert the British war efforts, generated extensive joint campaigns for civil liberties. After the war, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements became the vehicles of this unity. For a small though significant minority, participating and supporting these anti-colonial mass movements evolved into a rejection of the political authority and ideology of pan-Islamist and nationalist leaders. *From anti-authoritarian communitarianism they would arrive at communism.* (p. 23; emphasis added)

Again, "anti-colonial political Islam dominated the world of the urban intelligentsia when Muzaffar arrived in the city" (p. 23).²

The chapter on "Migration" sets the stage for the entry of Muzaffar into Calcutta within the larger scenario, his education, his foray into the world of letters, etc. (pp. 7-43). The Muslim working-class context within which Muzaffar found himself is an important element that shaped his political ideas (chapter titled "Towards the Left"). Thus, "Muslims were heavily concentrated among the urban working class. The Census of 1901 recorded that municipal wards with the largest industrial population had a significant Muslim presence" (p. 55). Cooltala ward, the Port area and Garden Reach were among those with a high concentration of the Muslim work force.

Around 1911, Muslims were almost as numerous as Hindu workers in the jute industry. Muslims monopolised the tailoring profession, and they were overwhelmingly in the majority as sailors, boatmen, carters, coachmen and stable boys. They supplied most of the bakers, nearly all the butchers, the majority of construction workers and also those engaged in the tobacco trade. Muslims workers also had a sizeable presence in the printing presses. Half of the beggars in Calcutta proper were Muslims (p. 55).

The period of Muzaffar's arrival in the city and the circles he moved in provided ample space for political engagement and for questioning of the politics of others engaged in the struggle against colonial rule. Workers' strikes, including those of tram workers and sweepers, and even police agents covering a wave of protests during the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements enveloped Calcutta, and in this atmosphere, as the author points out, "the transition from a curious bystander to a sympathetic onlooker, to a political activist, was not very unusual". It is in presenting this climate as well as the emergence of a Communist in its midst that Suchetana excels, with a book that seems to meander about at times, but towards a definitive 'culmination', as it were. Thus, the journey of Ahmad from the small island of Sandwip in the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta, from a 'curious onlooker' seeking a space as a political journalist to a Communist activist, is what is undertaken within the 200-odd pages of the book – through the lives of hard struggle of Ahmad and his comrades, and through other odd lives of sympathisers among the working classes where they found shelter and food; and by the end of it, one has learnt a lot more about Calcutta as also about Ahmad. Ahmad's ideas about the need for a movement comprised of peasants and workers rather than the *bhadralok* elite also give the sense of one end of the struggle that has managed to persist even in post-independence Indian politics, in general. Thus, the personal hardships made acute by severe crises on the money front for Ahmad, and his sustained relationships with people belonging to similar backgrounds, led to a more inclusive idea of resistance.

Interaction with the urban poor in the late 1910s and early 1920s was instrumental in Muzaffar Ahmad's political transformation. The encounters between his intellectual milieu and popular upheavals propelled him towards left politics. The process was associated with the heightened interest in socialist ideas following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and the post-war international mood of anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism ...

Further, "the 'educated unemployed' saw themselves as prisoners of social insecurities initiated by an imperialist war" (p. 64).

There are also the minute observations about the city and the people who live in it, negotiating their space and livelihoods and everyday struggles in an atmosphere of larger unrest, which give the book a remarkable emotional edge, if you like, generally missing in works of this nature. For instance, you find mention of the link between the Muslims and the second-hand book trade, and how this also had a connection with the emerging urban intelligentsia. "While the established booksellers and publishers mainly came from a Bengali Hindu middle and upper class background, poor Muslims monopolised the used-books trade. ... These traders, and book binders, a profession also dominated by Muslims, created a social link between the urban working class and the Calcutta intelligentsia" (p. 24). You start imagining the young students who might crowd such corners (as they do today) and their lively interaction with the booksellers in a politically tumultuous moment. The book is written with abundant use of sources that are local, organic to the region (in this case, the city). This is a text of the region in general, and Calcutta in particular.

In this context, one may mention the author's point about the language used in writings by Muzaffar Ahmad in the course of his political education in Calcutta, which is Bengali, as against Islamic Arabic. Bengali Muslims identified with Bengali as their language and as not necessarily related to a larger non-contextual religious identity. Muzaffar Ahmad seems to have had strong views in this regard. "In the article, '*Urdu Bhasha o Bangiya Musalman*' (The Urdu Language and the Bengali Muslim), he attacked all those who tried to impose Urdu on Bengali Muslims in the most vehement terms. He declared that no 'Islamic wave' could rob the Bengali Muslims of their language, and that such a move would meet with stiff resistance" (p. 33). Thus the making of Muzaffar Ahmad may also be seen as a signifier of the constant churning in Calcutta over issues of language, culture, caste, class, religion and political ideology, which was much more alive and vibrant in a sense than what a linear view of nationalism and of the nationalist consciousness in the struggle for independence from colonial rule would reckon or even acknowledge.

The offer to take charge of the paper *Nabajug* (floated by the leader of the Bengal Congress, Fazlul Haq) gave Muzaffar and Nazrul Islam the space for political journalism that they so yearned for. They wished to create a space in this paper for movements of workers and peasants. The paper apparently became immensely popular, and also invoked the displeasure of the British government authorities.

The political 'movement' of Muzaffar happened in the city of Calcutta through his many attempts at creating a space for himself in the literary

world and through the political journalism that *Nabajug* provided space for initially. By 1921, he was apparently participating in labour organisations' activities and was inspired by Bolshevism.

His muted protest mentality found direct outlet through post-war social convulsions, and a persistent urge to think through the layers of large and small disappointments confronting radicalised middle class segments: unfulfilled popular aspirations underlying polyphonic anti-colonial resistance ... the sudden repeated assertions from below that went against hegemonies built through mass movements to advance proprietorial, social interests; and finally, class as a social force. (p. 85)

In today's times, with conditions as were prevalent in the times that the author analyses, is there a scope for such assertions? This is the sense that prevails upon one while reading the book.

Throughout the book one senses the depth and intensity of the author's engagement – not merely external engagement – with a historical subject. Muzaffar Ahmad's life and times in Calcutta; developing a network of individuals disillusioned with nationalist politics of the elite and exploring another world of resistance and struggle through the written word for the most part; of youngsters seeking alternatives. A complete history of the Indian independence movement must necessarily include the sacrifices and struggles of people such as Muzaffar Ahmad (but it usually does not).

The lucid style of writing and the recording of ever-so-minute details that are generally overlooked, make for a fascinating volume. For example:

A postman warned Muzaffar in late 1922 that the police were opening his mail regularly. In the face of social marginalisation and official persecution, these unexpected overtures and assistance from ordinary people indicated that the advocacy of mass radical action could evoke popular sympathy, even if there was no identifiable left political organisation or movement at that time. (p. 109)¹

Another important aspect is with regard to the relatively limited literature on Communist freedom fighters. In general, when compared to the lengthy tomes on nationalist Congress leaders, you find remarkably limited works on Communist political activists at the time of the movement for independence from colonialism, especially from the south, the east and, to some extent, the west of India. There is need to resurrect the voices of these neglected moments of history, of a radical group that understood the resistance to colonialism as being part and parcel of a larger resistance to capitalism and a capitalist consciousness which furthered imperialist concerns. And to do this, it was necessary to restructure the-

social structure – essentially class, in those times. At the other end of the spectrum, one could find a person like Ambedkar who located caste oppression within this exclusionary structure, especially in the Indian context – within the nationalist framework, in spite of his many misgivings on the same. Both these streams, which played an important role in the freedom movement or struggle for independence, were successively and relatively successfully marginalised in mainstream history-writing pertaining to that period.

The significance of the book also lies in the time period chosen, within which a “socialist political identity in Bengal” (p. 125) was in the process of construction by people like Muzaffar as an option against the mainstream option for a future free India. Muzaffar Ahmad’s life also shows a person restless and constantly in pursuit of an identity that was not restricted to (or rather, perhaps he chose break through its self-limiting clutches) the idea of a Muslim – in seeking his own space and identity that was more informed than socially or culturally given, but accepting of it and aware of its importance at the same time through engagement, for instance, in the literary activities of the Eangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti, “devoted to the popularisation ... of Bengali literature among the Bengali Muslims” (p. 29).

While the first half of the book concentrates on creating the scenario in Calcutta which Muzaffar Ahmad entered, the most important part of the book, as I see it (and which could have done with some more detailed focus than the chapters preceding it), comes later, in the chapter titled “Class, Language, City”, where we find a discussion of his writings, the development of his Communist thinking, etc. While he came to Calcutta initially to become a writer, the larger context of the city and his own struggles made him a political activist. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements in the post-war period, were to play a major role in this transformation. We see here some other sides of Muzaffar: that of a man who was married young but with no particular interest in the notion of family, on political grounds. Though concerned, he maintained a distance from his own family back in Sandwip. The author mentions his memoirs which reveal his opinions – differences, disregard, resentment, respect, etc. – of fellow-comrades. His early association with M N Roy is mentioned, as also his severe criticism of Nalini Gupta, Dange, Dharani Goswami and Gopen Chakraborty, as seen in his memoirs (*Amar Jiban o Bharater Communist Party*). His other writings from the volumes *Probandho Sangkalan* and *Nirbachito Rachana Sangkalan* are also referred to by the author, which reveal his insights into the contemporary political scenario, his own struggles, time spent in prison, etc. He was the chief accused in the Meerut conspiracy case; in 1948, when

the Communist Party of India (CPI) was banned in parts of India, Muzaffar was again imprisoned. He was imprisoned once again later, when he was in his seventies. One wishes, though, that the book might have dealt with Muzaffar's memoirs with some more depth. The construction of the larger backdrop of the 'becoming' of Muzaffar the Communist takes longer in the book, reducing the memoirs and writings to the last section, which of course, subtly reveals the painful process of how he rose from being a political activist to later to become a senior Central Committee member of the CPI (1964).

As the author remarks at one place:

his memoirs ... offer a window to political currents and social processes obscured by time. They do not claim to be the autobiographical account of a mass leader, but of a marginal political actor whose attempts to promote a new political identity were severely restricted by the state, competing political formations and inner contradictions. That these forces were important in shaping the course of left politics in the 1920s cannot be denied. By focussing on the early communist movement, Muzaffar Ahmad provided an unusual record of a vanished but crucial era. (pp. 266–67)

An interesting insight into the revolutionaries of the freedom movement is seen in his memoir, which Suchetana records:

The emergence of the revolutionary terrorists was a memorable event in Bengal. ... The terrorist movement was without doubt an anti-British movement. But it was also a movement of Hindu revivalism. ... While in prison, I had seen one of their big leaders order an imposing picture of Goddess Kali from the jail office in the morning. ... (p. 259)²

He was a man completely dedicated to the Communist ideology, overcoming several personal travails and holding on to his convictions against family and private property, and whose life did not change much till his last years in his seventies.

The book has a lot in it that will urge one to read different parts of it at different times, to try and understand both the city of Calcutta and the processes of the evolution of the Left between the 1920s and 30s. But we may wish to learn more of Muzaffar Ahmad in the post-independence years as well, and of his increasing sense of disillusionment towards Party comrades, as his memoirs reveal – and as to what led him to this moment.

So, where would one place Muzaffar Ahmad in today's times? As a Muslim intellectual struggling through his limited personal context for everyday survival, aching for a sense of identity of his own and seeking his own political space in a city like Calcutta already throbbing with rising

anti-colonial agitations of varied kinds – considering that perhaps we are somewhere coming back full circle today to an atmosphere of larger unrest over various aspects that have remained unresolved, or are being thrown across in newer forms, over the same questions of inequality, caste, communal oppression, economic instability and political turmoil? Suchetana's journey with Muzaffar Ahmad urges one to ask these questions afresh. And there may be other questions too, of a different nature, raised by this volume.

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Notes

1. The detail about the postman is referenced from an IB file (67/24:105/1924) as mentioned in the endnotes (62). Such finer details are brought to light when a mind engages with the idea that in the making of a significant historical persona there is a larger context, and the contributions of several ordinary and extraordinary individuals. It was no different in the case of Muzaffar Ahmad in the process of his becoming a Communist freedom fighter.
2. Paraphrasing from Muzaffar Ahmad's *Amar Jiban*.

Uma Chattopadhyay, *Dishonoured by Philosophers: Upamana in Indian Epistemology*, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 2009, HB, 255 pages, Rs 580

Uma Chattopadhyay has performed a very creditable task by writing a comprehensive text in English on *upamana*, one of the very special and significant concepts of Indian epistemology. This text, I believe, will provide access to a wide spectrum of scholars across countries and cultures, into the rich heritage of Indian philosophical pursuit, especially in the realm of epistemology. Epistemological concerns about the nature of knowledge, the scope of knowledge, types of knowledge, the possibility of knowledge, etc., have preoccupied the minds of philosophers since time immemorial. Across traditions, epistemological pursuits in the course of history or in conceptual understanding often diverge, converge or merge into one another. *Upamana* as a *pramana*, that is, a source of valid cognition, has hardly been recognised in the western epistemological tradition. What is most striking to me is Chattopadhyay's courage and conviction to author a full-fledged text on *upamana* as a *pramana*. Those who have some knowledge of Indian philosophical schools must have noticed the step-motherly attitude meted out to *upamana* generally, barring by the Naiyayikas and Mimamsakas. Most likely, Chattopadhyay has chosen the dramatic title, *Dishonoured by Philosophers*, for the book, to create a ripple in philosophical circles and to impel them to rethink *upamana* and its contribution to the cause of knowledge. A description of the nature of *upamana*, or what has been called knowledge by analogy, has failed to evoke equanimity even among staunch proponents of *upamana*. Chattopadhyay does not relent in her fight against either external critiques of *upamana*, as of the Buddhists and the Vaisesikas, or internal critiques, from among the Naiyayikas themselves. In the Preface the author acknowledges her commitment to the Nyaya tradition, and in her analysis, exposition and defence of knowledge by analogy, she owes allegiance to the great Naiyayika Udayanacharya.

In the present review an attempt will be made to orient the readers to the broad structural framework adopted in this book to highlight the major discussions on *upamana*. Of the five well-delineated sections of the present text, the first part divides into two chapters to provide exegeses of the classical Nyaya version and the classical Mimamsa version on *upamana*. It is difficult to

provide a rough-and-ready characterization of *upamana*, to begin with. Very abstractly speaking, *upamana* is supposed to be one of the causal factors that generates a sort of valid cognition (*upamiti*). Protagonists of *upamana*, not to speak of antagonists, differ in interpreting the meaning of *upamana* and also *upamiti*. No doubt, this is one of the very technical areas of the Indian epistemological endeavour.

Uma Chattopadhyay begins her discussion with the very first source provided by Gotama's *Nyayasutra* 1.1.6, and toils hard to bring out the implications of Gotama's definition of *upamana*, taking into consideration the interpretations and explanations offered by Nyaya stalwarts like Vatsyayana, Uddyotakara and Vacaspati Misra. Her gradual venture into the domain of the Mimamsakas makes the matter more complex. Among the Mimamsaka texts, Jaimini's *Mimamsasutra*, *Vritis* by Upavarsa, *Bhasya* by Savarasvami, *Sastradipika* by Parthasarathi and some other later commentaries are focal points of discussion. In the case of *upamiti*, its different features are discernible from the account provided by Savarasvami. *Upamana* in the sense of *upamitikarana* (i.e. the instrumental cause for *upamiti*) is *sadrisyam* (similarity) and thus *upamana* produces knowledge of things not in contact with sense organs (*asannikrista artha*). In this section the author deals with the subject elaborately to bring out all the implications of the Mimamsa view, which is necessary to get a precise idea of the difference between the Nyaya and Mimamsa accounts.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Critical Development of the Mimamsa and Nyaya Theory of *Upamana*', is self-explanatory. It includes chapter three, dealing with the Bauddha and Vaisesika objections against the classical Mimamsa view of *upamana*; and chapter four, dealing with the Mimamsa theory of *upamana*, the medieval and modern versions. The Mimamsa ontology accommodates *sadrisya* or similarity as one of the categories, and this provides justification from their perspective for admission of one singular means of knowledge for apprehending such an entity. If that be the logic behind the admission of *upamana* as an independent *pramana*, what will be the answer to those who do not leave any provision in their ontological scheme for an independent category like *sadrisya*? This is actually what happened with the Bauddhas and the Vaisesikas. Hence they do not admit *upamana* as an independent *pramana*. But Chattopadhyaya's explanation does not end here, for the other complexities centering on the admission of *upamana* as an independent *pramana* cannot be disposed of so hastily. Among the Mimamsakas, while there is unanimity about the admission of *upamana* as an independent *pramana*, some of them have reservations at the ontological level in accepting *sadrisya* as an independent category. Chattopadhyaya has tried her best to consult

some of the renowned classical texts on the concerned subject. It is praiseworthy that she has consulted recent Sanskrit literature by Pattabhi-ram Sastri and the unpublished papers of Badrinath Shukla. She has extensively covered Ratnakīrti's position by concentrating on relevant sections of the *Ratnakīrti-nibandhavalī* in her presentation of the Bauddha objection to classical Mimamsa. While discussing the objections of the Vaisesikas to classical Mimamsa, the author depends on Prasatpada's *Padarthadharmasangraha* and Sankara Misra's *Upasakara*. The book contains some valuable charts to represent the different arguments that were put forward by philosophers belonging to different schools.

The chapter entitled 'Mimamsa Theory of *Upamana*' handles another important and vast domain of expositions, arguments and counter-arguments. The main texts that are covered in this chapter include sections from Sabaravami's *Bhasya* and *Prakaranapancika* among others.

The third part of the book is concerned with 'Critical Development of the Nyaya Theory of *Upamana*', and with that end in view, it has chapters dealing with the Bauddha and Vaisesika objections against Nyaya theory (chapter 5), and development of the Nyaya theory of *upamana* (chapter 6). Part four of the book, entitled 'Some More Objections from Internal and External Critics', include the following chapters: 'Naiyayikadesi View on *Upamana*' (chapter 7); '*Upamana* Serves no Purpose in *Darsana*' (chapter 8). In the latter chapter, the author displays exemplary clarity in expounding the nitty-gritty behind the acceptance or rejection of *upamana* as an independent *pramana*. She comments on an interesting topic relating to the use of *upamana* to disprove the existence of God. She brings in Mimamsa views to clarify the usefulness of *upamana* from their viewpoint. The Mimamsa philosophy is not much discussed nowadays and while explaining some of the technicalities the author should perhaps have paid more much attention to their elaboration. In fact in many places long Sanskrit sentences have not been translated. This is especially evident where she brings in the ideas of *prakritiyaga*, *vikritiyaga*, etc.

Part five of the book deals with the 'Positive Views of Two Naiyayikas'. This part includes two important chapters: 'Jayantabhatta's Views on *Upamana*' (chapter 9) and 'Udayanacarya's Views on *Upamana*' (chapter 10). One of the objections against the Nyaya view of *upamana* is that it is nothing but *sabda pramana* and so need not be accorded an independent *pramana* status. Chattopadhyay painstakingly elaborates Jayantabhatta's rejoinder to this objection after his *Nyayamanjari*. She draws our attention to an important distinction made by Jayantabhatta to distinguish between *upamiti* and *sabdabuddhi*. In the case of *upamiti*, *atidesavakya*, i.e. an authoritative statement about the relation between a name and a word, is

crucial; it is not to be considered as equivalent to *śabda*. The author also explains the position of Udayanacharya in this debate and outlines his position quite elaborately.

Whether or not to admit *upamāna* as an independent means of knowledge (*pramāna*) rests on the positing of an object/objects which is/are unique, in the sense that they are taken to be knowable by depending only on one means of knowledge. In Indian philosophy those who advocate the theory of *pramanavyavastha*, that is an orderliness among *pramanas* in grasping their respective objects, are firmly convinced of which *pramāna* is fit for grasping which type of object. On the other hand, some philosophers defend *pramanasamplaba*, i.e. crisscrossing of *pramanas* in knowing the same object. Compared to the *pramanavyavasthavadins* the approach adopted by the *pramanasamplabavadins* appear less restrictive. But from that it should not be supposed that in their theory each and every object is amenable to more than one *pramāna*. The Naiyayikas are *pramanasamplabavadins* but according to them there are some specific or unique objects which are graspable by only one *pramāna*. In the present context, the paradigm instance of such an object is the relation between a name and an object (*saṃjñasamjñisambandha*) and the *upamāna* is such a unique *pramāna*. The logic that predominates is that from the *visayabhava* (absence of object), the absence of *upamāna* (*pramanabhava*) is established. The author concludes the book by upholding the Nyaya position. In fact she very rightly hints at lurking ambiguities in the very notion of *upamāna* even among the supporters of *upamāna*. The whole endeavour of the author justifies the claim of the Naiyayikas who hold *upamāna* to be a distinctive *pramāna* that gives us knowledge about the relation between word and object.

There is no doubt about the wide range of technicalities that the book attempts to cover. It is a credible attempt to unfold a technical concept of Indian philosophy in the English language, especially since most interesting discussions of Indian philosophy are inaccessible to non-Sanskrit scholars. This quality publication by D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, will surely appease the thirst for Indian philosophical research materials. The author's style of presentation is interesting. Since the topic is so technical she cannot avoid being repetitive in many instances. Sometimes it seems like too much of a recapitulation, and the repetition of points that have already been covered at the beginning of some new chapters could have been avoided. In many places long Sanskrit idioms or phrases have been left without any translation into English, probably with the supposition that everybody will understand the meaning of those phrases. All in all, *Upamāna in Indian Epistemology* is a very informative and thought-provoking book. The author's aim to write a text on *upamāna* by collecting

and collating available original Sanskrit texts deserves appreciation. Critics will always have scope for raising questions about the interpretation of a particular clause or another, and it is likely that some of Chattopadhyay's reading of classical texts may not match with that of others. Sanskrit-knowing scholars may also get an opportunity to test how their ideas fare when expressed in idioms and phrases of a different language. The main contribution of this book lies in regenerating interest among philosophers and scholars to read, understand and interpret Indian philosophical texts.

In fine, the book demonstrates the history of neglect and refutation of a philosophical idea over centuries and its final vindication by one significant school of Indian philosophy. In that sense, *upamana* has been both dishonoured and honoured by different schools of Indian philosophy. If the story of its dishonour is more dramatic as it came from a number of schools for a long period of time, its honour is realistic in the sense that it came from the realist school of Indian philosophy. The implications of this vindication for linguistic philosophy today should also not be ignored. The social and moral story lies in the fact that an idea can be reconsidered with vehemence even after its prolonged dishonour from myriad quarters.

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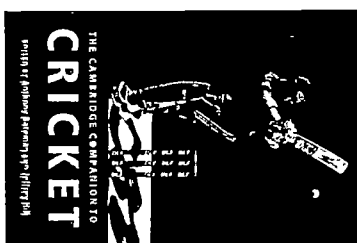


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Editorial

A concern often expressed in higher educational institutions across the world is that “academic freedom” is being eroded as a result of developments within the academy and interventions from outside. While there is much substance to that assertion, it is often expressed in contexts where what is at stake is not academic freedom properly defined. As the lead article to this issue we carry a lecture delivered by Akeel Bilgrami at the New School, in which he discusses a widely held notion of what constitutes academic freedom, which leads to a case for displaying “balance” in academic discussion, especially in the classroom.

It starts from the position that academic institutions being sites for intellectual inquiry and research have as one of their chief goals the pursuit of truth. But since we know from the past that what was often held as true proved not to be so, the pursuit of truth requires a variety of opinions to be expressed on any subject, even if one finds some to be false, since it is possible that they might be true. Thus, it is held, these institutions must serve as a *marketplace for ideas*. That argument has been justified in more structured fashion by John Stuart Mill. Bilgrami presents Mill’s argument in detail and argues that it is based on a fallacy and that it recommends the pursuit of truth even while holding that we can never know we have achieved it when we have. Once these features of the argument are recognised, the case for the specific kind of “balance” it recommends is undermined.

This does not mean that there is no “dogmatism” present in university environments the world over. It does not consist, however, of the *obtuseness* involved in someone failing to recognize counter-evidence that was presented to him, or the *dishonesty* involved in refusing to recognise counter-evidence that had been presented to him. Rather, argues, Bilgrami, it “is found in submerged forms of academic exclusion” in which alternative frameworks for pursuing the truth do not even become visible.

In his contribution Prabhat Patnaik revisits the paradox characterising contemporary India where high growth is accompanied by increasing poverty. GDP growth has accelerated even if not as much as the official figures suggest. Yet, poverty when measured by the direct indicator of per capita calorie consumption, as opposed to poverty measured by those below the official “poverty line”, has risen sharply. Countering arguments that poverty could be reducing despite declining per capita calorie consumption, Patnaik holds that unlike the decades immediately after Independence when the government adopted an interventionist strategy, absolute impoverishment has increased during the period when neoliberal policies have been pursued.

Turning to an explanation, he attributes this increase in absolute poverty to the nature of the growth process, which relies heavily on a process of primitive accumulation of capital. That process either forces petty producers to remain in their occupations only by suffering a substantial reduction in their earnings, or destroys petty production and forces those employed into the already large reserve army of labour, that erodes their earnings even more. These developments in the labour market also weaken the strength of those in the organised sector leading to a stagnation or decline in their real earnings as well. The net consequence is impoverishment, despite high growth.

The third essay in this issue by Rahul Menon was awarded the prize in the Arun Ghosh Memorial Essay Competition on the theme *Reimagining Development in India*. It seeks to examine the alternatives that exist for poor countries to pursue a development path that prioritises full employment at a decent wage, as opposed to merely emphasising GDP growth. The premise is that these alternatives cannot be based on analyses that view these countries as operating in isolation. That would miss the limiting impact that global economic structures and international inequality have on development options.

To study these options the essay turns to history and analyses thereof to argue that state intervention appears to be a prerequisite for any successful process of development. But there are two issues of relevance here. First, state intervention, even when it ensures successful industrialisation, need not be benign. Second, forms and measures of intervention observed as part of the historical experience of either the currently developed or the newly-industrialised countries require that they be based on special relationships with the rest of the world. These may not be open to the less developed or underdeveloped countries of today. This requires considering alternative international arrangements, such as common markets with equitable trade, along with the internal restructuring needed in individual countries for successful development.

The issue includes a review article by Sasheej Hegde, examining arguments in a book attempting to simultaneously engage philosophical approaches to human rights, that are concerned with what human rights are, why we have them (or do not have them) and what they are based, and a political approach which is concerned principally with the problem of realizing human rights.

We conclude with a tribute to historian R.S. Sharma, a distinguished and respected contributor to *Social Scientist* in the past, who left us recently.

Truth, Balance and Freedom

Akeel Bilgrami

Though there is much radical—and often unpleasant—disagreement on the fundamental questions around academic freedom, these disagreements tend to be between people who seldom find themselves speaking to each other on an occasion such as this or even, in general, speaking to the same audience. On this subject, as in so much else in the political arena these days, one finds oneself speaking only to those with whom one is measurably agreed, at least on the *fundamental* issues. As proponents of academic freedom, we all recognize who the opponents of academic freedom are but we seldom find ourselves conversing with them in academic conferences. We only tend to speak to them or *at* them in heated political debates when a controversy arises, as for instance at Columbia University over the promotion of faculty in Middle Eastern studies, or in those states where the very idea of a curricular commitment to modern evolutionary biology is viewed with hostility. I will not be considering such controversial cases of overt political influence on the academy. This is not because they are not important. The threats they pose are very real, when they occur, and the need for resistance to these threats is as urgent as anything in the academy. But they raise no interesting intellectual issues at a fundamental level over which anyone here is likely to be disagreed. If there is disagreement in a forum of the kind at which we are presently gathered, it is likely to be on relatively *marginal* questions, such as, for instance, whether academic freedom is a special case of the more basic constitutional right to free speech or whether instead it is a special form of freedom tied to the specific mission of universities.

What might a philosopher contribute to these more marginal questions? In this brief lecture, I would like to make a fuss about a standard argument for a conception of academic freedom which we all seem to subscribe to when it is coarsely described but which, when we describe it more finely, and look at the arguments more closely, is quite implausible and leads directly to thoroughly confused ideas about displaying 'balance' in our classrooms and our pedagogy quite generally¹. I will then

use some of the points and distinctions I make in this critique to explore whether there is scope for locating more subtle and interesting (and actually more pervasive) kinds of threats to academic freedom than the obviously controversial ones that I mentioned above which all of us here, I assume, find an abomination, and which, as I said, raise no interesting issues for any of us, even if they ring urgent alarms. At the very end, I will venture to advocate imbalance of a very specific kind in the 'extra-mural' domain, when it is neither inquiry nor classroom curriculum that is at stake but the effort to engage the intellectual and political culture at large.

II

No matter which stand is taken on the marginal question as to whether academic freedom is a special case of the constitutional right to free speech or something special and apart, there is a great and recurring tendency in the literature on the subject to appeal to the same arguments and metaphors and intuitions to present the justifications for academic freedom, along roughly the following lines. First, there is a statement of purpose or *goal*: academic institutions are sites for intellectual inquiry and research and therefore one of their chief goals is the pursuit of truth and the pedagogical project of conveying the truth, as one discovers it and conceives it in one's research; to students, and to set students on the path of discovering further truths in the future on their own. And then second, there is a statement of the *conditions for the pursuit of that goal*: this pursuit of truth is best carried out, it is said, under conditions where a variety of opinions are allowed to be expressed on any subject, even if one finds some of them quite false, since it is possible that they might be true and one's own view might turn out to be false. Often, the metaphor used to capture this ethos and its efficacies in the matter of truth, is that truth surfaces in a '*market place of ideas*'.

When Justice Holmes first put that phrase into the air, he was not particularly thinking about the academy, but quite generally about the shape of a free society.² In fact, as two Columbia historians (Richard Hofstadter and Walter Metzger³) pointed out, Holmes was really expressing in more intuitive and metaphorical terms the justification for tolerance in speech quite generally, for which John Stuart Mill had earlier in *On Liberty* given a more structured argument with premises and a conclusion.⁴ So even if one thought that academic freedom was set apart from the articulations of the First Amendment, the structure of the *underlying* philosophical argument is the same as to be found in Mill's more general argument for liberty of speech as a fundamental principle of the polity at large. I want to spend some time on this underlying

argument but before I do, it is worth emphasizing that it is not just given by professional and lay philosophers, it is found in the case law of this country in which universities have figured, repeatedly. Thus for instance in *Keyishan vs Board of Regents of the State University of New York* (1967), the language of the Supreme court of this country explicitly cites the phrase 'marketplace of ideas' and talks of the 'robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues'. That is just one example. There are also literally scores of cases in the lower courts as well that appeal to Millian considerations, and they too begin by defining the goal of universities as being one of seeking the truth in intellectual inquiry

What is Mill's argument and why does it have such a strong appeal for law, philosophy, and even our everyday understanding of the justifications for academic freedom? Its appeal is the appeal of a certain fallibilist epistemology that widely underlies the classical and orthodox liberal mentality. Curiously, this form of fallibilism clashed starkly with the pragmatist epistemology of American thinkers like Peirce and also with the heterodox form of liberalism that one finds in American thinkers like Dewey. Yet the American courts and American quotidian opinion cite Holmes and Mill like a mantra.

Mill's argument has two premises and a conclusion. The premises are: 1) Many of our past opinions which we had held with great conviction have turned out to be false. 2) So, some of our current opinions that we hold with great conviction may also turn out to be false. From these premises, he drew a conclusion about tolerance and free speech: 3) Therefore, let us tolerate dissenting opinions just in case our current opinions are wrong and these dissenting opinions are right.

The 'market place of ideas' keeps us honest. Since we can never be sure that we are right, a market place of opinions, many of which may oppose our own opinions, may well throw up the truth, displacing our own convictions about it. Metzger and Hofstadter make this connection between Holmes and Mill explicit and there is no doubt that something like this justification, if true, would hold for free speech in the academy with particular force, even if we saw the academy as standing apart from constitutional contexts for free speech, because the academy is specially geared to pursue the truth in its various disciplinary pursuits.

Let's then stare at the argument for a while.

Mill's argument is based on an induction. It is often called Mill's 'meta-inductive argument'. The induction is found in the transition from the first premise to the second. It is called a *meta*-induction presumably because whereas most inductions go from observations about the *world* in the past to conclusions about the future, his induction goes from an

observation about our past *beliefs* about the world to a conclusion about our present and future *beliefs* (viz., that they may be false).

There is an extraordinary ambition in this argument. It hopes to persuade us of a value, the value of free speech, as something for a polity or a university to embrace, on the basis of something that is pure rational argument. By this I mean that it does not aim to convince us to adopt a value (the value of free speech) *on the basis of any other moral or political values*. It hopes to convince us on grounds that are, in that sense, value-free. It does not matter what moral or political values we have, so long as we are capable of induction, we are supposed to see the force of the argument. And since inductive capacities, like deductive capacities, are part of general rational capacities, possessed by all human beings, if the argument is right, everyone should see the value in free speech, just in virtue of their rationality. To fail to do so, therefore, is nothing less than irrational. Mill gives quite other arguments for free speech in that careless masterpiece —such as for instance that free speech is a value to live by because it encourages diversity as well as creativity in society, and that a willingness to submit to the clash of ideas is essential to the moral courage of human beings and prevents their mental pacification. But such argument is inherently less ambitious. Its appeal is confined to those who value individual creativity, or variety, or what Blake called 'mental fight'. There is a risk in any argument that comes to an evaluative conclusion by appealing to another value. Values are things that have variable appeal. And so those who do not subscribe to the other value will not be convinced by it. The meta-inductive argument, by contrast, if successful, is supposed to knock us down with a much more general logical force.

But is it successful? The incessant sloganeering about the 'market place of ideas' depends centrally on its success. Deep though it goes in liberal culture and sensibility, I think Mill's argument is a numbing fallacy.

To begin with, even at a cursory glance, you will notice that the judgement in the first premise is made from the point of view of one's current opinions and convictions. It is from our present point of view, from what we *currently take to be true*, that we are able to say that our past opinions are false. But the judgement in the second premise is telling us that our current point of view may contain false views and therefore to be unsure and diffident about them. Now, if we are unsure about our current beliefs, and our judgement in the first premise is made on the basis of our current beliefs, then to that extent we must be unsure of our first and basic premise. Any conclusion based on it therefore is bound to be, to that extent, itself shaky and uncertain.

There is another more fundamental internal problem with the argument. In characterizing it, I have said that it comes to a value

conclusion on the basis of premises that appeal merely to an induction, and not on the basis of any other political or moral value. Is this not to derive an *ought* from an *is*? Is it not a form of naturalistic fallacy? Now, I myself do doubt that one can get norms out of a normative void. That would be to think that values are something that we can dig deeper than and ground on some foundation that is not evaluative at all. If you believe in the irreducibility of values, as I do, then values can only be justified by other values and there is no escaping or getting behind or underneath values to see their point and rationale. But this sort of abstract objection to Mill's argument is less than satisfactory and I don't want to rest my case on it. I think there are more *internal* flaws in it.

For one thing, it is not obvious that there is *no* value at all hidden in what the argument appeals to in its justification for free speech. After all, since it says that one should adopt free speech because it creates a market place of ideas from which the truth, even if it goes against one's convictions, will emerge, one is assuming at least that there *is* value in pursuing the truth. Admittedly, the value of truth is a *cognitive* value and the value of free speech is a moral and political value. But even so, the fact is that we *are* appealing to another value to justify the value of free speech. It is only because we value truth and have it as a goal that we will be moved by the idea that a market place of ideas engendered by freedom of speech is something that we should adopt. So let us grant that the qualm about coming to norms from within a normative void does not apply to this argument.

Even if we did grant this, there is something internally peculiar about an argument that appeals to the value of truth and the goal of pursuing the truth, as it does, while also asserting, as the second premise does, that we can never know that we have achieved the truth. How can we claim to have a goal that we can never know we have achieved, when we have achieved it? What sort of goal is that? It is not perhaps as peculiar as having a goal that we know that we can never achieve. That is outright incoherent. You cannot coherently strive to achieve what you know to be impossible. But to allow that we can achieve a goal and yet insist that we can never *know* we have achieved it when we have, though not perhaps outright incoherent, is a very peculiar understanding of what goals are.

To put it explicitly, the internal tension is this: The argument's second premise says that beliefs whose truth we are utterly convinced about may turn out to be false. This strictly implies that we can never be sure that we have achieved the goal of truth, not even when we are quite convinced we have. And yet the argument presupposes that the pursuit of truth is a value and that we have it as a goal to pursue. If the goal of inquiry into the truth that all academic institutions embrace is really to

pursue in this way something that we never can be sure we have achieved, then we must be assuming that what we do, in pursuing it, is a bit like sending a message in a bottle out to sea. We never know what comes of it, we never know that it has arrived. What sort of epistemological project is that? It is a conception of inquiry in which we have no control over its success. If inquiry is successful, that success is, from our hapless point of view as inquirers, necessarily some sort of bonus or fluke.

The argument demands that our point of view of inquiry have a built in diffidence: we are supposed to be diffident even about our most well established claims. But such diffidence yields no instruction. The doubt expressed by the thought 'for all one knows even our strongest convictions as to what is true might be false' is an idle form of doubt. Consider the paradox of the preface, in which the author says coyly, "Something or other that I say in the next four hundred pages is bound to be erroneous or false" (and then typically adds, and "for those errors I alone am to blame and not all those nice people I have just acknowledged as having aided my thought and argument"). The author's declaration of impending falsity in the pages to come is idle because it gives him or her no instruction about what to do to remedy things. It is not as if he knows what it is that is bound to be false, and why. Like Mill and Holmes he just thinks that that is the tentativeness and diffidence with which we must hold the views we have written down. But a doubt that gives no instruction in his practice of writing is a doubt that does not make any epistemic difference. And as pragmatists say, something that makes no difference to practice (not even to cognitive practice, as in this case) makes no difference to inquiry and epistemology at all.⁵ Any argument which arrives at a commitment to free speech on the basis of a conception of inquiry that has such precarious coherence hardly deserves the centrality that it has been given in the liberal tradition of political thought.

In the immediate context of the political controversies we find ourselves in, in university life, the conception of academic freedom based on such a classical liberal form of argument leads *directly* to the advice we often get, sometimes even from University presidents, about how we should be *balanced* in what we say in our classrooms, showing consideration to all points of view even those which from our point of view we confidently know to be wrong. This directive wholly fails to understand what sort of role the ideal of 'balance' ought to play in the academy. It is a worthy ideal but we have to understand the right place and context for it in the academy.

Let's go along, as we have been doing, with the assumption that a primary aim of universities is to pursue the truth in our various disciplinary inquiries and that the point of pedagogy is to try and present

the truth we have found by presenting evidence and argument for it. Now if 'balance' has any role to play in all this, its role is entirely *nested within* this primary goal, *not* something *independent* of this goal. And within this primary goal, the only thing that 'balance' *could* mean is that one must look at *all* the evidence that is available to one in our inquiries. (This is the cognitive counterpart to what decision theorists call 'the total evidence requirement'.) What 'balance' cannot possibly mean is the nonsensical thing that the directive we are considering tells us, viz., the equal presentation in the classroom of two contradictory views. No educator with any minimal rationality would do that on the elementary grounds that if there are two contradictory views, only one can be right. Of course if she cannot make up her mind on the evidence as to which one is right, she might present the case for both views even-handedly. But presumably such undecidedness is an *occasional* phenomenon. If so, balance cannot be put down as a *requirement* for pedagogy in the classroom. Hence, the constant demand that we always present both sides of a disagreement presupposes a conception of education as a sort of chronic dithering. It is far more sensible to say that 'balance' allows that an educator presents her judgement with complete conviction because 'balance' in the academy is nothing other than a synonym for the idea that we must look at *all* the evidence before coming to our convictions. It has no other role or meaning. Attempts to give it another meaning (as in the directive with which I am finding fault) are drawn from a fault-line that has its beginnings in the canonical Millian form of liberal argument for free speech.⁶

III

I have been inveighing against a very standard liberal argument and a metaphor that it yields about truth emerging from a market place of ideas, which goes deep in the sensibility of our self-understanding in the academy and in the courts that have pronounced judgement in controversial cases that the academy has thrown up. This may have given the impression that I am recommending more dogmatism regarding our own convictions than a commitment to academic freedom can allow. That impression would be wrong.

The criticisms I have just made of Mill's argument are quite compatible with the view (which is my own view) that there is far too much dogmatism in the academy, especially in the social sciences and even in the humanities. (And if it is less so in the natural sciences, still, as Kuhn pointed out almost five decades ago, there is some there too.) As a matter of fact, my view is that if we could characterize more or less exactly what this dogmatism is, we would have identified the most pervasive as well as

the most insidious and interesting form of threat to academic freedom.

As I said at the outset, this paper was going to raise a typical philosopher's fuss about how to rigorously characterize the arguments by which we justify academic freedom and I have said that I find Holmes's metaphor and Mill's argument less than exact and plausible and this implies that theirs is not the way to understand the dogmatism that thwarts academic freedom. To be fussy is to demand that one gets certain distinctions carefully right. And I am claiming that to diagnose and combat the far too high levels of dogmatism in the academy, we do not have to assume a fallibilist notion of diffidence and doubt. It is one thing to be undogmatic in the way that academic freedom demands, quite another to have the sort of notion of inquiry suggested by Millian and classical liberal arguments for academic freedom.

Let me convey what I have in mind by the dogmatism that constitutes a threat to academic freedom by returning to the paradox of the preface. The paradox offers us a site for locating a useful taxonomy via which we can identify what sort of dogmatism amounts to such a threat.

I had said about the paradox that the *generalized*, that is to say, the *unspecific* form of doubt that is stated in the preface ('something or other in what follows in these pages may not be true', echoing Mill's argument that our strongest convictions may turn out to be false) gives the author no instruction as to what to do about it. He cannot possibly be moved to do anything about his *text* by a doubt such as this. What the author will be moved and instructed by is not this sort of doubt but rather—if he or she is not dishonest and not obtuse—by some *specific* evidence or argument that is provided against one or other of his *specific* conclusions or claims. Now, both these qualifications 'if he or she is not dishonest and not obtuse' are revealing.

They show that there is no direct relevance of this issue I have just raised (about ignoring *specific* counter-evidence and counter-argument presented to one) to the question of academic freedom. Suppose someone failed to recognize counter-evidence that was presented to him. That would be a sign of his obtuseness. Suppose again that someone did recognize that counter-evidence had been presented to him by some colleague and he simply ignored it. That would be a sign of his intellectual dishonesty. But both these things are quite *separate* kinds of wrong from thwarting academic freedom. Now, it is true that sometimes those who are dishonest in this way are caused by this dishonesty to suppress or hound out someone who presented that evidence and that would, of course, be threatening to academic freedom; but suppressing or hounding someone out is a matter quite separable from what we are concerned with, the ignoring of evidence that is provided against what one takes to be the truth.

If this is right, we have identified so far three different phenomena. *First*, there is academic *dishonesty* —to recognize evidence or argument that goes against one's conclusions but ignore it. This in itself is *not* academic unfreedom. *Second*, there is the inability to even recognize the force of counter-evidence and counter-argument. Let's call this academic or intellectual *obtuse*ness. And, even more obviously, that is not a case of academic unfreedom either. *Third*, there is the suppression of those who present counter-evidence and counter-argument that one has recognized to be so and one has dishonestly evaded. This, I have said, is a case of academic unfreedom. But, as I said at the beginning of the lecture, it is a very obvious case and not a very interesting one, so I will simply put such cases aside since they raise no difficult questions. It is not even clearly characterizable as a case of dogmatism though it bears some relations to dogmatism.

We, then, still do not have the kind of academic unfreedom that is genuinely and clearly also a case of dogmatism. So now, finally *fourth* in our taxonomy, I want to present that kind of dogmatism and show why it is a far more interesting and unobvious and also a more pervasive threat to academic freedom than is identified in the third; and in presenting it, it will become clear what its relation is to the first and second phenomena in the taxonomy, from which it is also important to distinguish it, especially the first phenomenon with which it is too often conflated.

The dogmatism that interests me is found in submerged forms of academic *exclusion* when we circle the wagons around our own frameworks for discussion so that *alternative frameworks* for pursuing the truth simply will not even become visible on the horizon of our research agenda. This form of dogmatism is distinguishable from the first of our four phenomena, academic dishonesty of the kind that refuses to accept counter-evidence and argument presented in refutation of some specific conclusion of our inquiry. Why? Because alternative frameworks *do not refute our conclusions directly* with counter evidence or arguments, so much as point to other, possibly deeper and more interesting ways of looking at what we are studying. And here is the crucial point. *If they do* contain counter-arguments and counter-evidence to our own claims and convictions, those will only surface *further downstream*, well *after* the frameworks are recognized by us upstream as possibly fruitful forms of investigation. But it is this recognition *upstream* that the dogmatist in us finds so hard to confer and it is in this failure that academic unfreedom (rather than intellectual dishonesty) is located.

These are cases in which a discipline discourages the development of frameworks outside of a set of assumptions on which there is mainstream consensus —and the political influence on the formation and maintenance

of these exclusive assumptions, where it exists, is very indirect indeed, so indirect that it would need a fair amount of diagnostic work to reveal it since the *practitioners themselves are often quite innocent of the influence*. (On the other hand it is not as if this is a rare or unusual phenomenon. It is widespread and is quite well known and many of you know it closely since what has made The New School, where we are gathered, one of the most valuable institutions of higher learning in this country is that it has valiantly housed—indeed it has been something of a hospice for—those suffering from an exclusion of unorthodox frameworks for thinking about a range of themes in a range of different disciplines.)

Dogmatism of this kind is also distinguishable from the third sort of flaw, obtuseness. To be dogmatic in this way is not at all to be lacking in the acuity that would recognize the force of counter-evidence and counter-argument. If one has failed to recognize any counter-evidence (downstream, in my metaphor), that is because one has (further upstream) not even so much as recognized the possibility of the framework from which it flows. It is not as if the counter-evidence is there for us to see downstream and we are not perceptive enough to see it. Rather it is *not there for us to see* downstream because we have not recognized the *framework* upstream, from *within which it is visible*. And this last failure is a kind of dogmatism, not stupidity.

Among disciplines, Economics provides the most gorgeous examples of this. It is perhaps the worst offender in inuring itself against alternative frameworks of thought and analysis. In fact, I will venture to say that I have never come across a discipline that combines as much extraordinary sophistication and high-powered intellect and intelligence with as much demonstrable falsehood. So, for instance, some of the most brilliant intellectuals I have known to this day make claims about the trickle down of wealth in capitalist economies and present them with the most sophisticated quantitative methods, despite the plain fact that wealth has not trickled down (at least not to the places where it needs to trickle down), *anywhere in the world in the entire history of capitalist political economy*. If a physicist were to make some of the claims that economists have made which have been falsified as repeatedly as they have, they would not only have their careers terminated, they would properly be the laughing stock of the profession. Now, there is no direct political influence that forces this sort of refusal to question, leave alone give up, one's assumptions in a discipline such as Economics. The regulation is wholly *within* the discipline's profession and even there, there may be very little browbeating or intellectual bullying, that is to say, very little *explicit* regulation. It is largely unconscious self-censorship—often done with career advancement in mind—that threatens academic freedom in such disciplines.

On the very evening after I wrote these words in a draft of this lecture, I was over at a dinner at my economist colleague Joe Stiglitz's apartment and I impertinently told him that I was going to raise this point in a lecture I was to give at a conference on academic freedom at the New School the next day. His response was memorable. "Akeel, I agree with you about economists but I don't understand why you are so puzzled. One would only be puzzled if one were making the wrong assumption about Economics. What you should be assuming is that—as it is done by most economists—Economics is really a religion. And so why should you be puzzled by the fact that they cling to and never give up their views despite their frequent falsification." So I will rephrase my point: one apparently makes one's way up in a church hierarchy by clinging fast to the orthodox faith.

But there is the following difference. The church has had a history of explicit and rigid regulation of what may or may not be said and pursued in its fold. But, as I said, if there is political (or corporate) influence in play in the sort of dogmatism I have described in Economics, it is not obviously visible and direct, and the protagonists in economic inquiry in universities would be quite genuinely clueless about it and, with no dishonesty, deny its influence. Sometimes, as in my own subject of analytic philosophy, where there is a great deal of exclusion of alternative frameworks for discussion, there is no political influence, *however indirect*, in play. If there is a question of power and politics involved it is entirely internal to the discipline, the power that is felt and enjoyed simply in keeping certain ways of thinking out of the orbit of discussion, forming small coteries of people referring to each other's work with no concern that the issues they discuss are issues that have no bearing on anything of fundamental concern to any of a number of disciplines with which philosophy had always been concerned before, say, even fifty years ago, and from which it has now managed to isolate itself for the most part. Richard Rorty had tried to raise Kuhnian questions for the discipline of analytic philosophy⁷⁷ and spoken with eloquence about its insularity and he was certainly right to notice just how exclusionary the subject had become, the more it had become a *profession in universities*.

Moving away from specific disciplinary examples, the general point that emerges from these examples can be made if one recalls that De Tocqueville famously said "I know of no country where there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America." And here is a wildly curious thing. At the same time, it is America that has more free institutions (including academic institutions) than anywhere else in the world. How can this extraordinarily paradoxical duality co-exist? What explains this paradox? I can't possibly try to provide an

explanation here,⁸ but whatever it is that explains it will provide a very good sense of the deep, that is to say, submerged, forms of academic unfreedom that exist in this country. When the freest academic institutions coexist with some of the highest levels of academic unfreedom in the democratic world, the sources of unfreedom are bound to be far subtler than is captured by the standard vocabulary of 'suppression', 'brainwashing', 'political pressure', 'manipulation', and so on. That is why this fourth phenomenon, this pervasive sort of dogmatism, is a far more interesting case of academic unfreedom than the third phenomenon in our taxonomy.

When a person working with unorthodox frameworks of research is looked upon with *perfect sincerity* by professionals, as someone unfortunate and alienated and to be pitied as irrelevant rather than bullied and hounded; we know, not only that the political influences on these professionals are not even easily identified, leave alone easily confronted, we also know that this kind of thwarting of academic freedom needs a quite different descriptive vocabulary than I used in describing the third phenomenon.

Equally, I would insist that it is different from the first phenomenon of academic dishonesty as well because to accuse these professionals of *dishonesty* (rather than in their dogmatism unconsciously perpetrating academic *unfreedom*) would be to be glibly moralistic since (if I am right in making the upstream/downstream metaphor) it is not *honesty* that requires that people should be willing to allow frameworks of investigations other than their own. At any rate it is not honesty in the sense that is required to admit that one's views have been refuted, when one has been shown evidence against them and one is not too obtuse to recognize the evidence. To insist that they are both a case of dishonesty would be to perpetrate a (not very good) pun.

The interest and subtlety of this exclusionary phenomenon, then, lies in its distinguishability from all of the other three in our quartet: academic dishonesty, academic stupidity, and straightforward and obvious forms of academic suppression. Despite its subtlety, it is a recognizable assault on academic freedom, and it is the more important to analyze in detail precisely because there is nothing as obvious (or infrequent) about it as there is about the efforts at external influence of Christian groups on science curricula or of Zionist groups on Middle East studies departments, in some universities. Being much more subtle it is also much more pervasive than these more obvious phenomena — and much harder to resist. Different people feel it differently at different times. Frameworks for serious research in race and gender felt it constantly for decades till as late as the seventies of the last century. Quite

possibly more old-fashioned forms of humanistic scholarship in a range of literary disciplines began to feel it since the late eighties and nineties of that century. And I daresay, research programs which pursue seriously socialist forms of analysis feel it more than ever today in Economics departments...

I have tried in this lecture to shift attention away from the fallibilist epistemological presuppositions of metaphors such as 'the market place of ideas' and its classical Millian arguments for academic freedom, and I have tried to focus it instead on the need to diagnose the sorts of unconscious attitudes that make for unwitting disciplinary mandarins and gatekeepers, 'normal scientists' as Kuhn called them. One doesn't need to be diffident in the conviction with which one holds one's views in order to be resist such attitudes. We should allow alternative frameworks not because we have some generalized doubt that we ourselves might be holding false views. We should allow alternative frameworks for quite different kind of reasons, also found in Mill's writing on liberty, as I said, having to do with the fact that if we allow for frameworks of investigation other than our own, we make for an attractively diverse intellectual ethos and in doing so allow the creativity of different sorts of people and minds to flower. These sorts of consideration in favour of academic freedom, unlike Mill's argument considered in Section II which appeals to all those capable of inductive reasoning and in pursuit of the truth, gives rise to a picture of academic freedom that appeals *only* to those who think that there is value in creativity and diversity in the academy. The appeal therefore is frankly disadvantaged by its less than universal reach. But, on the other hand, the picture can claim the advantage of not being landed with a bizarre conception of inquiry presupposed by Mill's more ambitious argument and the metaphorical cliché that it has yielded about the 'market place of ideas'.

The point I want to repeat in marking this difference from Holmes' metaphor and from Mill's meta-inductive argument on which that metaphor is based, is that if considerations about truth and falsity enter this picture, it is only, as I said, *further downstream* when something that other frameworks deliver might claim to be a truth that clashes with ours. But since those considerations do not surface upstream where we are pursuing the goal of inquiring into the truth in our investigations, that goal of pursuing the truth need never be conceived of as a goal whose success is necessarily opaque to its seekers, as in Mill's argument for freedom. In our own pursuits towards the truth, we may be as confident in the truth of the deliverances of our investigations as is merited by the evidence in our possession, and we need feel no unnecessary urge to display balance in the classroom, if we have shown balance and scruple in

our survey of the evidence on which our convictions are based, the only place where balance is relevant in the first place.

IV

Having said that, I should like to conclude with a point that rotates the angle a bit on the question of balance.

One of the questions that has most exercised scholars of academic freedom is the extent to which the concept and the policy applies to the utterances of a scholar not within the university but in what is called the 'extra-mural' context. Is a professor free to say things outside the university in public forums that would be unsuitable for one reason or another in the classroom or at official university events? There is a lot of interesting writing on this subject, some of the most interesting by scholars of the law. But I want to say something here that is a bit off that beaten track.

When it is not classroom curriculum and intellectual inquiry in the university but political debate in general outside the study and the classroom that is in question, there are good reasons why the views one expresses can and often should be substantially *imbalanced*. And by imbalance here, I don't just mean that they should speak with conviction for one side of a disagreement, if that side has the preponderance of evidence on its side. That form of imbalance is what my critique of Mill and Holmes has tried to establish as perfectly appropriate in the classroom. But for extra-curricular and extra-mural public speech by academics, I have in mind the moral appropriateness of a *further* and more *wilful* kind of imbalance. To conclude in one's thought what the evidence in one's investigations dictate is not really a matter of choice or will."

The evidence *compels* us, as it were. But to be imbalanced in the *further* way I am about to mention is a matter of will and moral decision. Let me explain.

I find it not only understandable but honourable, if someone speaking and writing in America finds it important to *stress much more* the wrongs of the American government and its allies and clients, like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, (now even India), Indonesia under Suharto, Chile under Pinochet.... rather than speak obsessively, as is so often done, about the wrongs done by Muslim terrorists or Islamic theocratic regimes or, for that matter, Cuba and North Korea... But if the same person was speaking or writing, say, in the Palestinian territories or in Arab newspapers, it would be far more admirable if he were to criticize Hamas or Islamic regimes like Iran's.... So also, unlike the many who were abusive towards him for not doing so, I find it entirely honourable that Sartre, living in Paris in the Cold War ethos, refused to spend his

time criticizing the Soviet Union and instead criticized Western governments for the most part.

It is said that whenever Sakharov criticized the Soviet Union's treatment of dissidents in the fifties, he was chastised by his government for showing an imbalance and not speaking out against the treatment of blacks in the American South. That is precisely the kind of imbalance that courageous academics are going to be accused of by the enemies of academic freedom in this country, and I hope that all of us will have the courage to continue being imbalanced in just this way.

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Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Jonathan Cole, Isaac Levi, and Carol Rovane, for helpful comments on a draft of this paper. I have also benefited from the discussion of a fragment of this paper presented to a workshop on pragmatism at the Institute of Public Knowledge at New York University, in particular the verbal commentary made during the discussion on that occasion by Craig Calhoun, Benjamin Lee, and Richard Sennett.
- 2 Actually, it was the *idea* and not the *expression* that Oliver Wendell Holmes put into the air in his dissenting opinion in 'Abrams v/s The United States'. His own expression was "free trade in ideas". The expression 'market place of ideas' was first used in the language of the Supreme Court in 'Keyishan vs Board of Regents of the State University of New York' (1967).
- 3 Hofstadter, R., Metzger, W.P. (1955). *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, pp. 527).
- 4 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter II. (London: Longman, Roberts and Green, 1869)
- 5 To be more precise and detailed, the pragmatist —Peirce, for instance; in his remarkably profound and original paper "The Fixation of Belief", *Collected Papers*, volume 5 (Harvard University Press) —makes a distinction within inquiry between our settled beliefs and our hypotheses. See also Isaac Levi, *The Enterprise of Knowledge* (MIT Press 1986) for an elaborate and interesting deployment of this distinction to construct a theory of the dynamics of knowledge or what is sometimes called a theory of 'belief revision'. Hypotheses don't command our confidence in the same way that our beliefs do. Mill might be right to ask us, as inquirers, to have some diffidence in the way we hold our hypotheses to be true since, unlike a settled belief, an hypothesis, even by our own lights, is still up for grabs, it is not something we have decisively counted as having the full prestige of 'truth'. But making this distinction and granting that he has a point about diffidence for one half of the distinction (hypotheses), does not help with Mill's meta-inductive argument for liberty.

The distinction merely says that unlike a settled belief (such as, say her belief that the earth is not flat), a scientist today might make an hypothesis that she is hoping to have confirmed by the evidence. She will hold the latter with diffidence but not the former. But, if the former is held without diffidence, then Mill's argument for liberty does not hold for such settled beliefs. That is absurd, from Mill's point of view. He would not have wanted 'flat-earthers' to be tyrannized and suppressed, so he would not have been prepared to restrict his argument for liberty to just hypotheses. He would have wanted freedom of speech and discussion to apply to the expression and discussion of *all* beliefs, settled and hypothetical. The trouble with his argument is that he extrapolates fallaciously from the diffidence that is properly advocated for hypotheses to *all* beliefs, even settled ones. And he *must* do so, since liberty presumably will apply to the expression of all beliefs. That is why I am suggesting that one should simply abandon this argument, with its fallibilist appeal to diffidence, *altogether* as providing the basis for free speech. It is the wrong basis for liberty. We should be looking for entirely different grounds and arguments for liberty, some of which Mill himself provides elsewhere in that work.

- 6 It might be thought that there is no very direct link between the broad liberal mentality towards freedom of speech and academic freedom that I am situating in Mill's argument and this talk of 'balance' in the university. After all there are much more straightforward political motives for those interested in protecting Israel from the harsh criticisms of its actions towards Palestinians that it deserves, to insist on 'balance' in the way coteremporary Middle Eastern politics is taught. If both sides are constantly being presented equally, as is demanded by 'balance', then the force of such decisive criticism can be softened. I don't deny that there are these political motives for demanding balance in cases of this kind as well as other cases. But we can't forget that many political motives of this kind are cloaked in high-sounding intellectual arguments so that their nakedness, qua political motives, is hidden. Just think of the way slaves were said to be not quite 'persons' by ideologues rationalizing slave-ownership or the way natives were said to be lacking 'rationality' by colonists. These philosophical arguments are a constant factor in the pursuit of political motives. Millian forms of liberalism similarly often underlie (as rationalizations) the political motives for demands for balance in pedagogy.
- 7 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)
- 8 Noam Chomsky and Edward Hermann in their rightly celebrated *Manufacturing Consent* have addressed this subject with the focus primarily on the media in this country and I am hoping that Jonathan Cole in his forthcoming magnum opus on the research university in America will — among the many other things about the American academy that that book is ambitiously intended to address—speak to this issue with the focus on the universities in this country.
- 9 I realize that it is a matter of will whether one *presents* in a classroom (or indeed in one's research) what one has evidence for. That is why failing to do so is to be described as 'dishonesty'. I am only saying here that when the evidence compels us to draw a conclusion, the will is not in play, it is not a matter of choice, even though coming to believe something on the basis of evidence is in the realm of the intentional.

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There are two unmistakable features of the contemporary Indian economic and social reality, which together constitute a remarkable puzzle. On the one hand there has been a clear acceleration in the rate of growth of the Gross Domestic Product of the Indian economy, generally since the mid-eighties, and pronouncedly in the last decade; and on the other, there has been an increase in the magnitude of *absolute poverty*.

Let us look at the evidence for each of these assertions, taking growth first. There are of course serious conceptual and statistical problems associated with the measurement of the growth rate. The conceptual problems arise from the very notion of Gross Domestic Product which the United Nations System of National Accounts has prescribed in a standardized form for all nations. Under this system, service sector output is part of GDP (which it was not in the former socialist countries, since they took production to be identical with *material production*).

Now, the "output" of the service sector is a dubious concept for two distinct reasons: first, it is impossible to distinguish between "transfer" and "exchange", so that the same activity which appears as "exchange" in one case appears as "transfer" in another. In an "exchange" situation, "output" is supposedly exchanged against "output", so that both sides of the transaction figure in GDP; but in "transfer" the service rendered by the transferee does not figure in GDP. Given the fact that the distinction between the two is so important for GDP, their actual fact of being indistinguishable makes the GDP concept ill-founded.

The classic example of this was provided by A.C. Pigou, the renowned Cambridge economist, who had pointed out that if a person married his maid then the GDP of a country went down (Pigou 1920). The reason was that the payment made to the maid, being an "exchange", was against the purchase of an "output" produced by her, namely the "output" of her services, and hence was counted as part of the total service sector "output" of the economy, while the subsistence requirement of the wife, who did exactly the same work as she did earlier as a

maid, being a "transfer" from her husband and not an "exchange", her service was not included in "output".

Secondly, this particular problem of its being impossible to distinguish between "transfer" and "exchange" is compounded by the fact that the only measure of "output" in the case of services, *even within whatever is counted as "output"*, is the actual payment made for the service, and not any other independent measure as in the case of material products. Hence if the government, for instance, raises the salaries of its employees and meets this additional expenditure by imposing direct taxes on the people, then the GDP goes up: while the direct tax payment is a transfer and makes no difference to the GDP estimate, the higher salaries *ipso facto* get counted as higher "service" output. All this makes the concept of the GDP itself, and hence the concept of its growth rate, dubious.

The problem however is further compounded by measurement issues. In many service sector activities, the only source of information on incomes is from periodic sample surveys, and the "output" is calculated by multiplying estimated employment by the per capita income figure thrown up from these surveys. Now, even assuming that these surveys throw up accurate information, since these are typically the unorganized activities where the reserve army of labour of the economy is often concentrated, what this procedure entails is that a swelling of the reserve army in the economy appears paradoxically as an acceleration of the growth rate of the economy!

These problems are particularly serious in the context of the Indian economy since the service sector has been the fastest growing one in the recent high-growth period. But no matter what adjustments we make to the service sector's "output" to take account of the issues raised above, it still turns out that there has been an acceleration in the rate of growth of the Indian economy, though not as much as is suggested by official figures. Hence we can take the acceleration in growth rate of GDP as a fact of life.

II

Now let us look at the evidence on poverty. The official criterion for the identification of poverty (until it was changed recently after the Tendulkar Committee Report) has been the intake of 2400 calories or less per person per day in rural India and 2100 calories or less in urban India. By this criterion, poverty has certainly increased: direct measurement of calorie-intake suggests that 74.5 percent of the rural population was "poor" in 1993-4, and 87 percent in 2004-5; the corresponding figures were 57 percent and 64 percent respectively for the urban population¹.

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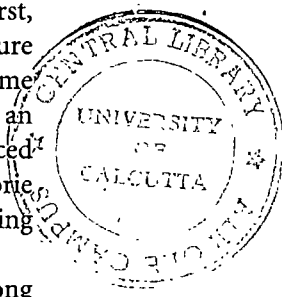
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Foodgrain absorption figures confirm this conclusion. Per capita foodgrain absorption (defined as net output minus net exports minus net increase in stocks) which, in round figures, was 200 kg. per annum in "British India" at the beginning of the twentieth century declined drastically to less than 150 kg. by the time of independence (Blyn 1966). Strenuous efforts by successive governments in independent India raised it to 180 kg. by the end of the eighties; but there has been a decline thereafter, marginal at first but precipitous after the late nineties², so that per capita foodgrain absorption in 2008, at 156 kg. by FAO estimates, was lower than in any year after 1953. The period of high growth is precisely the one associated with reduction in foodgrain absorption, and hence with significant absolute impoverishment.

The question naturally arises: if this is what is happening, then how do official figures show precisely the opposite, namely a decline in the headcount ratio of poverty? They do so by using a peculiar method: instead of looking at how many people have access to less than the stipulated calories as we have done, for which data exist, they ask what is the overall per capita consumption expenditure level at which these calorie intakes are achieved. This is called the "poverty line" and calculated for some base year. It is then updated using (for rural areas) the consumer price index for agricultural labourers, and the people falling below this expenditure level in any year are counted as poor. Such indirect as opposed to direct method of counting poverty makes the official estimate vulnerable to the quirks of the price index, and, for reasons briefly mentioned later, have the practical consequence of understating the extent of poverty.

Two arguments are typically advanced by official spokesmen against the direct method used above, viz. the identification of reduced foodgrain intake with increased poverty. The first states that there tends to be a diversification of consumption away from foodgrains as incomes increase, so that reduced foodgrain intake signifies, contrary to the above claim, a qualitative improvement in the consumption basket, and hence in living standards. The second argument, closely related to the first, states that the reason for reduced foodgrain intake is larger expenditure on other things, in particular healthcare, even among lower income groups; and this is indicative of changing "tastes", associated with an improved quality of life, and hence economic betterment. Reduced foodgrain intake in short, and hence by implication reduced calorie intake, is indicative not of increased poverty but of improved living standards.

Both arguments however are wrong. The first argument is wrong because with increased incomes, the *direct* consumption of foodgrains



may go down, but the *indirect* consumption of foodgrains, as processed food (such as cornflakes) or as feedgrains for animal products (such as mutton, pork, chicken etc.) goes up; as a result the *total absorption of foodgrain per capita*, direct and indirect taken together, increases. In the U.S for example the per capita total absorption, direct plus indirect, of foodgrains is around 900 kg. per annum compared to India's 156 kg. In fact, comparison across countries shows that almost 50 percent of the observed difference in per capita *total* foodgrain absorption is "explained" (statistically) by per capita real income difference³. Hence per capita foodgrain absorption is the best possible proxy for economic well-being, and reduced foodgrain absorption is indicative of absolute impoverishment.

The fallacy of the second argument, that people are "choosing" to spend more on healthcare than on food, and that this is indicative of economic betterment, lies in its underlying assumption that anyone, even a poor man, compares at the margin the satisfaction to be derived from consuming more food with that from taking his child to the hospital when the child is ill. This assumption is wrong. In most people's perception the latter has absolute priority. Since this perception could not have emerged suddenly over the last decade, when per capita foodgrain absorption declined precipitously, the cause for this decline is likely to be a rise in healthcare costs over this period.

Such a rise has certainly been a feature of the neo-liberal era, owing to increasing drug prices and privatization of healthcare. Hence, the fact that expenditure on healthcare has gone up *even at the expense of food intake* in the last decade, can only be indicative of impoverishment, rather than of an improved quality of life. (One of the major problems with the consumer price index used in official calculations of the "poverty-line" is that the rise in healthcare costs is inadequately captured in this index).

III

This increase in absolute poverty in a period of unprecedented growth rates may appear paradoxical at first sight. Indeed the official position on this, though it will not concede any increase in absolute poverty, will be that even higher growth rates are needed for bringing down poverty, that the persistence, even accentuation, of poverty in a period of high growth is because this growth itself is not enough; growth has to be even faster.

But this argument, at the very least, is a *non sequitur*. If the acceleration of growth has been accompanied by worsening poverty, then, *unless some specific reason is adduced for this* (which it never is),

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there is no basis for arguing that a further acceleration in growth will suddenly achieve the very opposite, namely a reduction in poverty.

My argument, on the contrary, is that the very nature of this growth process has been such that its acceleration itself has accentuated poverty, in which case, unless there is a change in the *nature* of the growth process, a further acceleration in its *rate* may well accentuate poverty even further.

To anticipate my argument, growth in the Indian economy in the neo-liberal era has been accompanied by a process of primitive accumulation of capital, without simultaneously enlarging to an appropriate extent the active army of labour employed by capital. This has meant that the victims of the process of primitive accumulation of capital have either lingered on in their traditional occupations at even lower levels of living than before, like many artisans did in the face of the de-industrialization unleashed by colonialism, or swelled the ranks of the reserve army of labour, again at living standards much lower than what they enjoyed prior to the unleashing of primitive accumulation. In either case there is a worsening in their condition; and they in turn weaken the bargaining strength of the active army of labour, which prevents any increase in the wage rate of the latter. Taking the working population as a whole therefore there is an absolute worsening in its average living standard, and hence an accentuation of absolute poverty⁴.

The concept of "primitive accumulation of capital" was used by Marx to refer to the process of dispossession of petty producers from their means of production, which created the basis for the development of capitalism. Marx in turn had been influenced by Adam Smith's concept of the "original accumulation of capital", and talked of it only at the end of the Volume I of *Capital*. Since this discussion was separate from the discussion of the accumulation process under capitalism in Volume I of *Capital* itself, and of the Schemes of Simple and Expanded Reproduction in Volume II of *Capital*, which looked at the capitalist mode in isolation from its external environment, there grew an impression that "primitive accumulation" referred only to the pre-history of capitalism, that having engaged in "primitive accumulation" capitalism then accumulated entirely within itself, in its own splendid isolation, without causing any further dispossession of the surrounding petty producers.

This however is erroneous. "Primitive accumulation" is an analytical, not a temporal category. The process of dispossession of petty producers continuously accompanies, throughout the history of capitalism, the process of appropriation and capitalization of surplus value extracted from workers within the capitalist system itself. Indeed Rosa Luxemburg

(1963) who had underscored the parallelism of the two processes, had seen one, viz. dispossession, as being the condition of the other, viz. the appropriation and capitalization of surplus value. But whatever one's assessment of Rosa Luxemburg's argument, the parallelism of the two processes is undeniable. "Primitive accumulation of capital" in short invariably accompanies "normal" accumulation of capital, its relative importance varying over time. And it consists of both phenomena: a squeeze on petty producers in *flow* terms, by turning the terms of trade against them or otherwise reducing their *incomes*, and an expropriation in *stock* terms by dispossessing them of their *assets*.

While "primitive accumulation" and "normal accumulation" (if one may call it so) proceed simultaneously throughout the history of capitalism, the extent of "primitive accumulation" increases several-fold in the era of globalization, when neo-liberal policies are being pursued. The fact that this is so is obvious from the experience of the Indian economy itself. Corporate retail chains come up to displace petty traders; agribusiness comes in to squeeze the peasantry; land grabbing financiers come in to displace peasants from their land; and petty producers of all descriptions everywhere get trapped between rising input prices caused by the withdrawal of State subsidies and declining output prices caused by the withdrawal of State protection from world commodity price trends. When we add to all this the rise in the cost of living, because of the privatization of education, health and several essential services, which affects the entire working population, we can gauge the virulence of the process of primitive accumulation that is unleashed.

The spate of peasant suicides that has occurred in the country over the last decade or so, of course, underscores this fact. But even apart from suicides, a remarkably disturbing picture is thrown up by village surveys, namely a fifth of operational holdings are found to systematically incur cash deficits, i.e. their cash output values are less than their cash paid-out costs, *even without imputing wages to family labour*, i.e. they actually have negative cash family incomes (Ramachandran 2010). There are in short a vast number of cases of potential peasant suicides waiting in the wings.

Of course expropriation of petty producers is the most direct form of primitive accumulation of capital, but it is only one form. The grabbing of common resources, the grabbing of State property at throwaway prices through "disinvestment" and "privatization", and the appropriation of huge State subsidies which in turn are financed through taxes upon the working population including the petty producers, are the other obvious forms, all of which undermine pre-capitalist or non-capitalist production. If we take the capitalist sector as our unit, then the bloc of capital

that constitutes this sector can grow in either of two ways: by its own expansion from the surplus value it generates, or by expropriating property from outside of this sector. This latter process, for which some may find the term "primitive accumulation" a little confusing since it refers to more than the *direct* expropriation of petty producers (though it should not be) may be alternatively christened "accumulation through encroachment", as distinct from "accumulation through expansion" which is what Marx's Reproduction Schemes (and the whole of standard growth theory in economics) describe⁵. One can then say that the era of neo-liberalism witnesses an enormous increase in the tempo of accumulation through encroachment.

The reason for this is simple. The immanent tendency of capitalism is to dispossess petty production. In the aftermath of decolonization of the third world, the *dirigiste* regimes that came up pursued, up to a point and in deference to the promises of the anti-colonial struggle, a policy of protecting, promoting and nurturing petty production against the spontaneous onslaught of capitalism; and India was no exception to this. Thus agriculture, which was predominantly peasant agriculture, was insulated against the vicissitudes of world price fluctuations; it was offered cheap credit after bank nationalization; it was provided with subsidized inputs, including water, electricity, diesel, and fertilizers; it was assured remunerative prices (in the case of 22 crops) backed by a system of public procurement; it was offered widespread extension services, through which high-yielding varieties of seeds, developed in government research laboratories, were distributed to usher in the so-called green revolution.

With the replacement of *dirigiste* policies by neo-liberalism the role of the State changes. This change is often referred to as a "withdrawal of the State" and greater reliance on the "market forces", but this is a mistaken perception. It entails a shift in the role of the State from being an entity apparently standing above classes, and arbitrating between them (even while its basic class character is manifested in its defence of bourgeois property and promotion of capitalist development), to one that becomes much more closely identified with big corporate and financial interests, on the argument that their interests are synonymous with "national interests". The State accordingly undertakes expenditure deflation in the name of "sound finance", withdraws from Welfare State measures, and ceases to defend, promote and nurture petty production, leaving it vulnerable to primitive accumulation. And since such primitive accumulation is not simultaneously accompanied by any significant increase in the size of the active army of labour, the result is a worsening of poverty.

IV

Let us examine the empirical support for the above explanation of the coexistence of high output growth and growth in absolute poverty. Here however we face a problem. Conceptual categories alas do not conform to the empirical categories used in available data. I have been arguing so far on the basis of a conceptual distinction between three categories of working people: the petty producers, the active army of labour under capitalism and the reserve army of labour. But the empirical categories under which employment data are available in India are: the self-employed, the casual workers and the regular wage workers, which are not exactly identical with these conceptual categories. From the empirical categories nonetheless it is possible to infer about the conceptual categories, and this is what I propose to do.

Since the reserve army of labour does not necessarily consist of persons who are wholly unemployed, and since even those who are actually unemployed may *appear to be employed* (the famous shoe-shine boys that Joan Robinson (1936) referred to while advancing her concept of "disguised unemployment"), the concept of employment itself cannot be detached from a certain reference income. *In other words, the "employed" or the active army of labour under capitalism, must be defined as consisting of only those who earn a certain "norm" wage rate.* All labourers, who earn less than this wage rate per unit period must be counted as constituting the reserve army of labour.

This "norm" wage rate is not some given absolute figure; it must be the wage rate associated with some given quality or category of employment, e.g. the average wage rate of workers in the organized manufacturing sector. It is reasonable to assume that the wage rate of this category of workers, i.e. this "norm" itself will not *fall* (even if it does not rise) when overall labour demand rises relative to labour supply, i.e. when the ratio of the reserve army of labour to the active army of labour at the old "norm" *falls*. We can thus infer what is happening in the labour market by looking at the movement of the wage rate of a particular category of workers; and the exact category we look at, and hence the exact definition of employment and unemployment among *labourers*, becomes immaterial as long as the movement of its wages are linked to general trends in the economy instead of being determined by particular circumstances.

Now, if by this criterion the reserve army of labour is inferred not to fall relative to the active army, and if at the same time we find a fall in the ratio of the self-employed to total work force, then it can be safely inferred that the relative decline in the number of self-employed is not because of any "pull effect" but a consequence of "push factors", i.e. of

factors that fall under the rubric of the primitive accumulation of capital. Thus the test for the explanation for growing poverty in the midst of accelerated growth advanced above lies in the behaviour of what I have called the “norm” wage rate. In what follows I shall take the wage rate of the workers in the organized manufacturing sector as the “norm wage rate”.

According to the Annual Survey of Industries data, the real wage rate of workers in the organized manufacturing sector remained more or less stagnant between 1992-3 and 2007-8 (Chandrasekhar 2010). But the period immediately preceding 1992-3 had itself witnessed a serious decline in the real wages because of the jacking up of the food prices with the introduction of neo-liberal reforms. If we take the period between 1987-8 and 2007-8, then we find a 20 percent decline in the absolute real wages of the workers in the organized manufacturing sector. More pertinently, since real wages show fluctuations, if we take triennial averages around a peak then between 1994-7 and 2005-8 there was a 9 percent decline in the real wages.

The decline in the “norm” wage rate over this period suggests that the ratio of the reserve army of labour to the active army could not have fallen. Indeed if we take employment in the organized manufacturing sector alone, then a careful analysis, comparing ASI with DGET data, comes to the following conclusion: “it does not appear that there has been any improvement in organised manufacturing employment during the period of high growth, which was also a period of high manufacturing growth” (Chandrasekhar 2010). If the active army of labour in the organized manufacturing sector has not increased *even in absolute numbers*, then the conclusion about the relative size of the reserve army not declining becomes even more plausible.

And the fact that during the period between 1993-4 and 2007-8, the share of self-employment in “usual status employment” came down in rural India, marginally for females but significantly for males (by 3 percentage points), lends credence to the conclusion, of which there are several *instances*, about the process of primitive accumulation of capital driving people away into seeking wage employment⁶. (And we must not forget that primitive accumulation also takes the form of keeping people in their old occupations with reduced incomes, so that the decline in self employment is *only one part* of the effect of primitive accumulation). The fact that the period of high growth in the Indian economy has witnessed primitive accumulation unaccompanied by any notable increase in the active army of labour is thus supported by evidence; and this explains the increase in poverty that has accompanied high growth.

V

The reason why rapid output growth has not caused much increase in employment is that labour productivity has also increased rapidly. At any given rate of output growth, whether there is a higher or lower rate of employment growth depends upon how labour productivity is behaving. If labour productivity grows rapidly, then this has a depressing effect on employment growth; and if employment growth is less than the rate of growth of the work force then the relative size of the reserve army increases. A high rate of labour productivity growth therefore is deleterious for employment growth.

There are at least three reasons why labour productivity increases rapidly under a neo-liberal regime. First, the process of internationalization of capital entails *inter alia* a readiness on the part of metropolitan capital to relocate production in third world countries with low wages, for servicing the global market. But the activities that are relocated from the metropolis to the third world, are higher labour-productivity activities than the pre-existing ones in the host countries. The very diffusion of activities in short increases labour productivity. Likewise, the domestic rich in the host countries, previously unable to emulate the life-styles of the metropolitan rich, by being denied access to a range of commodities and services enjoyed by the latter, now find this constraint removed by "economic liberalization"; domestic production of such commodities and services, which are necessarily high-labour-productivity activities (because they were innovated in the metropolis) comes up, which again raises labour productivity. In short, neo-liberalism allows a "catching up" in terms of technology, embodied in a range of new processes and products, which necessarily entails an increase in labour productivity.

Secondly, it is not only a matter of one-time "catching up". New processes and products are being continuously innovated. These innovations, partly because they originate in the metropolis itself and partly because of the very nature of capitalism, typically entail higher labour productivity; and in the neo-liberal regime they keep getting transplanted to the third world economies, resulting in a continuous increase in labour productivity.

Thirdly, with labour productivity growth increasing but real wages remaining virtually stagnant (if not declining) owing to the non-reduction in the relative size of the reserve army of labour, the share of surplus in output goes up. Given the fact that the surplus is spent generally on higher-labour-productivity activities, the fact that the share of surplus increases over time entails that the rate of transplantation of higher-labour-productivity activities is speeded up, which again contributes to a high rate of growth of labour productivity in the economy.

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The fact that extremely high rates of labour productivity growth under capitalism contribute towards a perpetuation or even accentuation of poverty is often not appreciated. We often come across exhortations by political leaders and public figures to raise productivity "to make the nation prosperous". But since it is an arithmetical truism that the rate of growth of labour demand is simply the difference between the rate of growth of output and the rate of growth of labour productivity, the higher the latter, the smaller, other things being the same, the rate of growth of labour demand and the greater the unemployment rate (and hence the magnitude of poverty) for any given rate of growth of the work force.

Gandhiji was aware of this fact which is why he deliberately wanted restrictions placed on the pace of technological change (and hence the rate of labour productivity growth), through the promotion of khadi and village industries. But the placing of such restrictions is incompatible with a neo-liberal regime, which is why the co-existence of accelerating growth and accentuating poverty becomes possible in such a regime.

Today's advanced capitalist economies too, experiencing rapid technological change within a domestic regime of *laissez faire*, had faced problems of an increasing relative size of the reserve army and accentuating mass poverty during the early years of their development. But they could overcome these problems, as we shall see later, at the expense of the third world economies, a possibility that is not open to the latter.

VI

Capitalism as a mode of production lacks any spontaneous mechanism for keeping the size of the reserve army relative to the active army of labour within bounds, and hence for effecting wage increases that give the workers some fruits of productivity growth. In other words there is no mechanism to ensure that wages increase in absolute terms over time as productivity improves and that *absolute poverty* decreases through capital accumulation. To say this is not to endorse a Lassalleian-Malthusian Iron Law of Wages, but merely to suggest that the opposite conclusion which has now become almost canonical, namely that with capital accumulation absolute poverty will necessarily disappear, has no theoretical basis either.

The most powerful theoretical case from within the Left that has been made in favour of the proposition that wages rise with productivity because of the spontaneous operation of capitalism is by Goodwin (1967). The argument is as follows: as the ratio of the reserve army to the active army increases, the share of wages in output falls and the share of profits, and hence the rate of profit, increases. This pushes up the rate of

accumulation which lowers the ratio of the reserve army to the active army of labour. In the long run, through such cyclical fluctuations, the ratio of the reserve army to the active army, *on average*, remains constant, and hence the wage share remains constant, with the real wage *rate* rising in tandem with productivity. Since the wage rate keeps going up, and since the relative size of the reserve army remains constant, the working population as a whole experiences a steady improvement in its living standards, as opposed to increasing absolute poverty.

There are two basic problems with this argument: first, it does not recognize that the rate of growth of labour productivity itself varies directly with the rate of output growth, which is why it argues that an increase in growth rate *ipso facto* raises employment growth. But the fact that productivity growth rises with output growth is an empirically well-established proposition (Kaldor (1978), Chandrasekhar (2010)). An increase in output growth rate therefore does not have a corresponding impact on employment growth, so that restricting the relative size of the reserve army through an increase in the output growth rate may not always be feasible.

Secondly, it assumes that a rise in profit share increases the growth rate, which can hold only in a world where investment is undertaken without any consideration of the expected growth of the market. This assumption is exactly what Ricardo had made in his famous argument on the introduction of machinery (which Marx had criticized). Machinery, Ricardo had argued, increases the share of profit in output since it raises labour productivity but not the real wage rate. Being an adherent of Say's Law (that there is never a problem of deficiency of aggregate demand), he assumed that all savings were invested; he also assumed that wages were by and large consumed while profits were by and large saved, so that savings, and hence investment were more or less identical with profits. A higher profit share arising from the introduction of machinery, which must also mean a higher profit rate (otherwise machinery will never be introduced in the first place) must translate itself into a higher investment rate, a higher growth rate, and therefore an eventual absorption of all those workers who were displaced by the introduction of machinery to start with.

But since investment decisions are influenced by expectations about the growth of the market (and there can be no better time to remind oneself of this than the current world capitalist crisis), *higher profit share may not stimulate any higher growth rate at all, so that technological progress may merely go on accentuating poverty*. In short, there is nothing in the spontaneous working of the capitalist system to ensure that the process of accumulation will not just go on accentuating poverty.

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VII

But then, it may be asked, hasn't history proven otherwise? Today's advanced capitalist countries after all have seen impressive increases in the material living standards of their working population even though they too in the early years of their development had perhaps witnessed increasing absolute poverty (as the debate involving Eric Hobsbawm, Max Hartwell and others in the context of early nineteenth century Britain underscores). Any accentuation of poverty under capitalism, it may therefore be thought, is only a transitional phenomenon.

Such, however, is by no means the case. The fact that the advanced capitalist countries overcame the accentuation of poverty that might have characterized the early years of their development, is because of three major, specific factors: the first was a massive migration of labour from Europe to the temperate regions of white settlement (from where tropical migrants were systematically barred and continue to remain barred). Fifty million Europeans migrated to places like Canada, U.S., Australia, and New Zealand in the period roughly between the mid-nineteenth century and the first world war (Lewis 1978). There they drove off the native inhabitants, occupied their land and earned per capita incomes which drove up the wage rates all over the metropolitan world. It was as if the bulk of the reserve army that had been created through primitive accumulation under metropolitan capitalism was being comfortably relocated; and this fact naturally strengthened the bargaining power of the active army of labour in the advanced capitalist countries.

Secondly, alongside the primitive accumulation carried out against the Amerindians and other native inhabitants of these regions, there was the primitive accumulation against established petty producers in colonies and semi-colonies like India and China through the process of so-called de-industrialization (Bagchi 1976). This produced a dispossessed mass of petty producers who constituted a reserve army of labour for metropolitan capitalism but were located in third world economies, and who kept the terms of trade of primary commodities vis á vis manufactured goods depressed. At the same time the fact that they were conveniently kept at a safe distance from the metropolis meant that the blame for the mass poverty that characterized their existence could not be laid at the door of capitalism.

The existence of this distantly located labour reserve negates the proposition that capitalism necessarily overcomes any mass poverty that it generates after a transitional period. What it does entail is that we have to look at the location of the mass poverty that capitalism generates more carefully.

The two factors just mentioned are both linked with colonialism. Our argument here is that the poverty in the *metropolis* caused by capitalism was only transitional because capitalism had access to colonies, to which such poverty could in effect be exported.

The third of the factors to which I wish to draw attention has to do with the fact that technological progress through much of the nineteenth century took the form of substituting living labour by machinery *that itself was largely produced with bare hands*. Machine-making itself being highly labour-intensive, technological progress was not as labour-displacing as it later became.

Hence, the fact that metropolitan capitalism which had produced domestic mass poverty in the early years of its development could overcome it later was not a result of any spontaneous tendency towards its elimination under capitalism; it was because of specific historical circumstances, having to do above all with the existence of colonies. The fact that countries like India which have no such colonies of their own (and no such potential colonies are left anymore in the world anyway) and have themselves inherited the mass poverty engendered by metropolitan capitalist development, are finding it difficult to eliminate it despite high growth, and are saddled on the contrary with its accentuation, should therefore cause no surprise.

VIII

"Mainstream" economists I am afraid are remarkably ignorant about history and formulate theories without paying much attention to the historical context. They would do well to pay heed to what history has to teach us on the issue of capitalism and mass poverty. And what historical experience makes clear is that if mass poverty is to be eliminated from an economy like India, then the entire trajectory of growth will have to be different from what is being pursued under neo-liberalism.

Some of the salient features of such an alternative growth trajectory are: the protection and promotion by the State of petty production, especially peasant agriculture; a widening of the base of such agriculture by land reforms; an improvement in the technological resilience of petty production through the voluntary introduction of organizational forms like co-operatives and collectives; the widespread provision of welfare state measures by the State, funded through taxing the rich, especially the corporate and financial interests; an industrialization drive based on an expansion of the mass market effected through significant output increases in peasant agriculture; a degree of control over the pace of technological and structural change (such as for instance preventing the replacement of petty traders by MNC retail chains); a revival of the

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public sector as a bulwark against private corporate capital (including MNCs); and for all this a reactivation of the State's capacity to intervene in the interests of society *against* financial and corporate entities (whose spontaneous response to such an agenda will be capital flight), through the institutionalization of a regime of capital controls. The real issue today is whether such an alternative trajectory will be tolerated within the confines of contemporary capitalism.

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Notes

- 1 These figures, based on NSS data, are from Utsa Patnaik (2010).
- 2 For per capita foodgrain absorption figures after independence, see Utsa Patnaik (2007)
- 3 This is the finding of Krishna Ram, research scholar at CESP, JNU, who has taken time series data for 94 countries over a period of 15 years (i.e. covered more than 1400 observations).
- 4 The argument can be stated as follows: let a , b , and c be the share in total work force of the petty producers, the reserve army of labour (strictly speaking) and the employed workers in the capitalist sector respectively ($a+b+c=1$), and let x , y , and z be their per capita real incomes, with $y < x$ and $y < z$ always. If z remains unchanged over time while c is either unchanged or falls, and if a and x fall over time, then $ax+by+cz$, which is the weighted average real per capita income of the working population, must fall over time, even with a constant y .
- 5 This distinction can be found in P. Patnaik (2005)
- 6 One can of course argue that petty producers being driven off their traditional occupations to seek wage employment (even when they do not succeed) is not because of primitive accumulation, but because, in the case of agriculture at any rate, of *parcellization of land*, i.e. the pressure of population on land. (Kautsky (1899) discussed this argument). But this pressure itself can be relieved if investment is undertaken in agriculture to raise land yields. The fact that this does not happen is itself because of the squeeze on peasant incomes that primitive accumulation entails. In other words parcellization and primitive accumulation are closely interlinked.

Re-imagining Development in India

Rahul Menon

Since the beginning of Development Economics, the idea that economic growth by itself, with a corresponding expansion of the amount of goods and services produced and consumed within a nation, is a sufficient condition for development, has been one accepted and propagated by the mainstream. For far too long it was taken as a given that the nations of the Third World must 'grow' and 'develop'; indeed, one would have been incredibly hard-pressed to find someone who asserted the contrary! However, equating economic growth with the well-being of its citizens is a notion that is being challenged and debated: the debate regarding 'inclusive growth' in India is a clear example of this.

There is no doubt that one must have a proper working definition of development before one enters the intense debates surrounding the issue. To that extent, this essay proposes that irrespective of the definition of development chosen, any idea of development should include achievement of full employment for the entire labour force and a real wage guaranteed to secure for the working classes a satisfactory standard of living². This is a *necessary* but by no means a *sufficient* condition for the achievement of development. Moreover, it must be noted that identifying development with the achievement of full employment for the labour force does not imply that the maintenance of a high rate of growth of measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is necessarily desirable *as an end in itself*. A high rate of growth of GDP is perfectly compatible with a slow expansion of employment opportunities (the phenomenon of 'jobless growth'):

Notwithstanding the important debates regarding an appropriate definition of development, the main focus of this essay is to examine the issues relating to the adoption of strategies necessary for a developing nation like India to improve levels of welfare for its population¹. We begin by studying the neo-mercantilist strategy of growth in order to critically examine the proposition that development can be brought about through a focus on the national economy alone. This essay will attempt to

examine one aspect regarding the process of development: that looking at the problem of development through a focus on the nation-state is a significant limiting factor in appreciating the structures of development, inequity and exploitation that operate globally. Hence, measures such as common markets between developing nations must be discussed as possible solutions to the problems of development for individual nations. While this essay does focus on a discussion of capital accumulation, it must be stressed that it *does not* make the case that capital accumulation is fully synonymous with development. For the purpose of this essay, we shall abstract from the idea that capital accumulation in a capitalist context inevitably leads to dispossession, an idea that, no doubt, must be studied and examined further.

The Role of the State in Fostering Growth

By and large, the strategies available to a nation attempting to launch on a path of rapid growth and development fall roughly into two categories: reliance on the working of free markets or active State intervention in the economy. The neo-classical model of growth and development advocates a minimal state whose only policy prescription is to 'get the prices right'³. The efficacy of this model is called into doubt when we realize that no nation has ever followed this model of development. Successful industrial transformations were always carried under the watchful eye of State policy determined to bring about suitable outcomes (see Reinert, 2007). Shafaeddin (2005) illustrates how the United States in the 19th century developed an extensive literature in favour of protectionism. Friedrich List was of the opinion that it was only after its industries were fully developed under protection did England begin to advocate free trade for the rest of the world (Shafaeddin, *ibid*: 55). U.Patnaik (2005) asserts that the markets of Britain in the 18th century were characterized by heavy tariffs to protect against the inflow of cheap foreign goods.

Erik Reinert is of the opinion that direct State intervention in the economy is essential for an economy to secure high standards of living for its populace. According to him, the growth performance of the very same nations that stress the importance of the market has been made possible by conscious State intervention and action (Reinert, 1999, 2007). Drawing on an economic tradition that ranges from Italian texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as well as Colbertism in France and Cameralism in Germany, Reinert feels that a nation can achieve a high level of industrialization and material welfare if the State is able to develop industries characterized by positive feedback and increasing returns. He stresses that the key to economic development is to focus

on the qualitative aspect of economic activities, arguing that different kinds of activities generate different kinds of externalities. A diversified industrial structure that is typified by increasing returns is able to generate positive externalities by stimulating the growth of innovations and newer technologies in associated industries. To that extent, Reinert believes that the first priority if a nation is to secure the fruits of growth (as has been done by the major industrialized nations) is to develop, through conscious State interaction and support, a diversified and healthy manufacturing sector. The nation should also tax or ban its raw material exports and concentrate on exporting manufactures, while limiting the import of foreign goods (Reinert 2007: 82-83). The policy of suppressing raw material exports serves two purposes; it makes raw materials more expensive for competing nations, as well as ensuring that the nation in question does not get trapped into focusing on the production and export of raw materials, a sector characterized by diminishing returns and lack of technological synergy⁴.

According to Friedrich List, free trade as a strategy for industrialization is incompatible with a situation wherein nations are at different levels of industrialization. His famous infant industry argument was conceived as a strategy by which the productive power of the economy could be built up before it could participate in international trade (Shafaeddin, 2005: 49). Protection of certain industries by the State is necessary in order to bring about a situation wherein integration with the international economy leads to an improvement in material welfare for the nation concerned. The growth story of the East Asian 'Tigers', namely South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand etc., has been hailed by many as proof of the efficacy of this strategy for newly industrializing nations to achieve a high level of growth and development.

The Dangers of State Intervention

Several authors have asserted that the notion that minimal state intervention led to high growth rates amongst the East Asian nations does not conform to reality. In fact, the strategy followed was the exact opposite; the State "...undertook strategic intervention both through the market as well as outside it..." (P.Patnaik, 1997: 235). Far from enabling market powers to carry out their business in a conducive environment, the developmental process in South Korea was characterized by the presence of an active, almost authoritarian State in the economic sphere.

It is true that the citizens of South Korea enjoy higher levels of material welfare than most people in the developing world. But at what cost? The developmental strategy followed by the State was clear in its priorities; labour's rights came second in the drive to maximize growth.

According to Sukhamoy Chakravarty, the accumulation process was sustained by the Korean State by "...giving a paramount role to capital in its dealing with labour..." (Chakravarty, 1997: 153).

The South Korean experience brings some important issues into sharp focus. It significantly contradicts the notion that the State has no active role to play in boosting growth in the economy. However, is it the case that such growth can only be brought about by a non-neutral State that openly sides with capital over labour during the accumulation process? Proponents of State intervention cannot seek to import the Korean model wholesale directly into any other country, for several features characteristic to the Korean context that aided growth may not be present in other countries. For example, P.Patnaik (1997) writes:

The first precondition for such a strategy is the existence of a certain internal class structure. A close relationship between the State and big capital presupposes not only the weakness of the working class movement...but the absence of alternative dominant classes, such as the landlords, demanding comparable concessions from the State. (ibid: 235)

India, with its multiplicity of power structures and social groupings, would require extremely heavy-handed intervention by the State in order to emulate the achievements of the Korean State. The fact that the Indian State post-independence did not aggressively side with one class against the other, and that the Indian political and social context is characterized by significant fractures and segmentation, led to the dominant proprietary classes cornering a large part of the surplus in the form of rents, leaving precious little for accumulation and capital expenditure by the State (Bardhan, 1984). The Indian State did not aggressively side with capital, yet gave in to the demands of the dominant classes, at the expense of capital accumulation.

The Historical Context

The argument so far has attempted to briefly examine one strategy towards bringing about greater material welfare; the role of the State in bringing about industrial growth. In examining the ideas of Reinert and List as well as the South Korean experience, we see that the State does have an important role to play in nurturing and improving industrial growth. State intervention is a powerful tool and is no doubt superior to a strategy of relying on the power of free markets to deliver higher growth; nevertheless the success of State intervention in particular nations at particular periods of time was contingent upon a certain historical context.

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Gilbert Rist, in a work that is otherwise highly problematic in its post-modern outlook on the question of development, nevertheless makes an important point with regard to the discourse on development that can also be read as a criticism of Reinert. He argues that the use of the terms 'developed' and 'under-developed' when the discipline began to focus on the problem of newly-independent nations had the effect of distancing the contemporary situation from the exploitative international context of colonialism. He writes:

...each nation was considered for itself: its 'development' was very largely an internal, self-generated, self-dynamizing phenomenon, even if it could be 'assisted' from outside. ... The historical conditions that would explain the 'lead' of some countries over others cannot enter into the argument, since the 'laws of development' are supposedly the same for all, and 'win their way through with iron necessity'... Not only does this bracket out the effects of conquest, colonization, the slave trade, the dismantling of craft production in India, the breaking up of social structures, and so on; it also presents things as if the existence of industrial countries did not radically alter the context in which candidates for industrialization have to operate. (Rist, 2009: 75).

Rist's criticism is a highly pertinent and valid one; the discourse of development implicitly assumes that all players are currently competing on an even field, and that the rules of the game favour all players. Looking at the process of development from the standpoint of a single nation alone obliterates the legacy of history. Reinert's prescription for the developing nations is completely devoid of any historical or international context, assuming that the same pattern of industrialization that was followed yesterday is valid today. To take an example; in England, which earlier used to export raw wool to Florence and elsewhere, Henry VII first levied export duties, which made raw wool more expensive to foreign producers, then gave tax exemptions and monopolies to newly established wool manufacturers. Then a hundred years later, when production capacity grew sufficiently in England to be able to process all the raw wool, Elizabeth I banned all raw wool exports from England. This 'Tudor Plan' helped establish the woolen industry in England (Reinert, 2007: 80). However, not only did this plan destroy the Florence woolen industry (ibid: 83), it was only made possible by banning all exports of woolen cloth from Ireland from 1699 (ibid: 99).

England's woolen industry, which it is claimed set the stage for its later industrialization (ibid: 80) was only made possible by the suppression of Ireland's domestic woolen industry. In claiming, therefore, that

by banning raw material exports and encouraging domestic industry developing nations would be able to industrialize, the historical context within which such transformations took place has been completely ignored. Moreover, Reinert's formulations sound suspiciously like a declaration of all out trade war, if every nation were to follow his policies of banning raw material exports "...in order to make raw materials more expensive to competing nations." (ibid: 83).

It might be argued that South Korea presents an example of a strategy of State intervention that worked, if one were to overlook the infringement on the rights of labour. However, Chakravarty argues that South Korea's development was also historically contingent on its relationship with its former occupier, Japan: "It is well-known and also quite clear from the balance of payments statistics of these countries (Korean and Taiwan) that Japan has acted as a major growth pole for them, especially from the middle sixties onwards." (Chakravarty, 1997:157). In studying past development experience in order to suggest policies for the future, one must under no circumstances ignore the historical contingencies which made certain strategies possible and successful.

The developmental processes of various nations have been contingent on concrete historical contexts that may or may not be available to nations today. Today's industrialized nations may have actively used State policy to steer their economy into achieving higher rates of income growth per capita, but to say that the developing world must follow the same policies as they did is tantamount to denying the legacies and contextual specificities history has bestowed upon them: namely, the legacy of colonialism. Reinert makes no mention of colonialism or the benefits the developed nations derived from colonial markets: Assured markets, captive raw materials, reserve armies of labour as well as political power to tailor colonies' economic policies to suit the metropolis were some of the 'advantages' to the colonizers which aided them in their developmental strategy, advantages which are not available to the developing world today⁵. Nor, it must be noted, is it being argued that neo-colonialism is a valid strategy for development that must be considered today.

Development is a historically contextual phenomenon and history matters. The study of the economics of development – as well as economic theory in general – can no longer afford to be divorced from the study of history if one seeks to better understand and explain the working of economic forces. A closer reading of history is essential if one is to fully appreciate and understand the processes that encouraged growth and development in the First World and the reasons why the developing nations must strike out on radical and alternative paths in order to fully achieve a better standard of living for its peoples.

The International Context

The success of the developed world can be traced back to the use of active State intervention aided by colonialism and imperialism. Britain began to advocate a policy of free trade only after it industrialized and modernized its industries while protecting itself against imports through strict protectionism. The access to colonial markets provided an advantage to Britain in two ways:

1. It allowed for assured markets for British exports. British protectionism ensured that Indian goods could not be sold in British markets, while British textiles flooded the Indian market, destroying the domestic textile industry. British textile imports to India continued to be of major importance to Britain through the 1800s and into the beginning of the 20th century.
2. Colonial markets were a source of cheap raw materials, ensuring assured access to raw materials as well as cheap imports that minimized the threat of inflation. In many cases, British colonial policy explicitly advocated the cultivation of crops deemed necessary to British commercial policy⁶.

The colonial world was one wherein the developed world manufactured and exported high-end manufactured goods, while the developing world served as a source of cheap raw materials and primary commodities (as well as low-end manufactures) and as markets for capital goods and manufactured goods which they did not produce⁷. Currently, while the relation between the developed and the developing world may not be characterized by explicit power relations as in colonialism, the economic picture is much the same: the developed world largely exports manufactured goods and capital goods, while the nations of the developing world are largely producers and exporters of primary commodities and semi-manufactured goods.

This international context must be explicitly recognized when talking about the possibilities of development for nations of the Third World. The fields of macroeconomics and development economics are largely based on a study of a *national* economy, with well-defined borders and a State, which acts to operationalize its policy prescriptions within these borders. This is unavoidable, since currently the world is divided into nation-states, and one must take into account real-world structures if one is to explain the working of the real-world accurately. However, focusing on the national economy alone does not allow one to fully perceive the international context, which determines the constraints within which developing nations are forced to operate. It might be argued that the study of international trade and the constraints placed by free capital flows have been fully integrated into the discipline, and as such the above criticism

does not merit much attention. But the point is that studying international trade as trading decisions between two nations does not allow us to perceive their integration into a definite *system*.

In the present-day globalized economic system, as in the colonial era, Third World nations play an important role by acting as a source of cheap raw materials and primary commodities. The fact that traditional economic analysis looks at the capitalist economy in isolation does not allow for a proper understanding of the mechanisms that ensure stability of the capitalist growth process. Most of primary commodity production takes place outside the borders of the industrialized capitalist nation in a context marked by the presence of vast reserves of labour. The greater demands of labour and the insistence on a fixed share of profits by the capitalists in the manufacturing sector of the developed nation can be accommodated by squeezing the claims of the primary commodity producers in the developing nation, ensuring that faster capital accumulation does not lead to accelerating inflation. Thus in the language of the NAIRU model, there is no one fixed level of employment compatible with non-accelerating inflation; *any* level of employment in the advanced capitalist nation can be secured by turning the terms of trade against the primary-producing sector (see P. Patnaik, 1997 and 2008).

According to Prebisch (1987: 118), "The characteristic lack of organization among the workers employed in primary production prevents them from obtaining wage increases comparable to those of the industrial countries and from maintaining the increases to the same extent." Moreover they are unable to migrate to the metropolitan capitalist sector due to curbs on international migration. The presence of large reserve armies of labour in the primary producing sectors of the developing nations is necessary to ensure that wages are kept fixed more or less at a subsistence level so that the advanced industrial nations are not threatened by the prospect of rising prices of primary commodity imports.

In the colonial period, the presence of the reserve army of labour was brought about through direct intervention by the colonial state. The destruction of the domestic textile industry in India by the British would be one such example. In Kenya, the colonial state employed a number of measures designed to dispossess the native population and provide workers for the farms of European settlers (Wolff, 1974). In the current context, the reserve army is kept up through a myriad of measures. The doctrines of 'sound finance' and the aversion to greater government spending implies that far from expanding spending in an effort to promote employment, State policy is more tuned towards demand-deflationary measures in an attempt to reduce and control budgetary deficits. In India, the disturbing trend towards acquisition of agricultural

land for industrial projects can be seen as dispossessing petty producers of their land and creating a mass of free labour.

The concept of development can no longer be studied by taking the developing nation in isolation. If a developing nation were to leave itself to the working of the free markets both domestically and globally, it risks being stuck in a pattern of trade not very different from that of the colonial era; namely, exporting primary commodities and semi-manufactured goods and importing high-end manufactures and capital goods. The presence of large reserve armies of labour in the developing world is necessary for stability in the developed world simply by providing for a source of cheap inputs and raw materials. The largely unorganized workers in the developing world shield the developed nations from the dangers of accelerating inflation by having their wage claims suppressed in order to accommodate the demands of organized workers and capital. This is brought about through a variety of means, both political and economic. Restrictions on migration, the rule of international finance that insists on balanced budgets, subsidies on the goods of the developed world; all these contribute to bring about such a situation.

State intervention provides a powerful alternative to nations that are unwilling to trust in the anarchy of the markets. As we have seen above, in the case of South Korea, authoritarianism and the infringement of workers' rights may be thought of as a valid tradeoff for faster growth. Such tendencies must be resisted fiercely, for there is no necessary tradeoff between political rights and economic welfare.

There are other constraints towards the active use of State intervention for the developing nation, and it is this we shall discuss below. We consider two cases, the capitalist model, and the socialist model.

Case I: The Capitalist Model

Capitalism requires the existence of a reserve army of labour for its successful functioning, but that does not imply that a single nation requires the presence within its own borders. A capitalist nation can achieve high rates of output growth with non-accelerating inflation and low levels of unemployment if it is able to shift the burden onto the workers of another nation. In the case of India, State intervention in the economy in order to bring about greater industrialization and higher wages for the workforce would only be possible if it could find itself nations to act as a periphery to its centre, importing agricultural and other primary commodities from them while exporting manufactured goods. However, for such a strategy to be successful, the question of choice of techniques becomes most important. In the drive towards industrialization, it is necessary that the increase in the rate of labour

productivity is not so high so as to slow down the rate of employment generation and leave unaffected the reserve army of labour⁸.

The use of external markets as shock absorbers is essential to the capitalist mode of development, and India cannot successfully provide decent employment with high (and rising) standards of living for its populace without it. However, even if it were able to do so, it does not imply that it would be freed from the other problems inherent to capitalism, namely cycles and fluctuations, as well as high inequality and the social tensions that may arise as a result. A domestic recession at home could possibly be overcome if some nation had a marked propensity to consume Indian goods and an export surplus could be developed against it. If the nation in question is a developing one, then the added consumption of Indian goods would mean a loss in demand for the manufacturing goods of that economy. India could only bring about successful development within its own borders by trapping another nation into an exploitative relationship with it⁹.

The possibility of such a situation occurring, however, depends on whether the developed world would be ready to lose an important source of stability. The fact that a developing nation which earlier acted as a source of raw materials as well as a 'shock absorber' would be able to break out of the existing exploitative context would be a threat to the stability of the system by reducing the amount of markets available to the developed world onto which the burdens of excess claims can be shifted, as well as acting as an example to other developing nations desirous of a different growth process. While some individual nations may be able to join the elite club of the developed, this is surely not a viable strategy for the betterment of the world's populace.

Even if such a trajectory of development were open to India, with high growth and a high standard of living for all, an essential component would be to find an external market ready to shoulder the burden of India's development. Such an option may be sought to be justified by some on narrow considerations of nationalism. But achieving development at the cost of citizens of another nation borders on hypocrisy, and must be rejected by progressive forces.

Case 2: The Socialist Model

A socialist model of development would entail the elimination of the profit motive from production, and the institution of socio-political mechanisms that ensures that workers in all sectors are able to secure an equitable distribution of income that assures a high standard of living. Such a system would not experience conflict over the distribution of the total product due to the absence of competing classes.

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Foreign trade would play an important role even if the development model within India happened to be one of socialism, and as such India would have to deal with a capitalist world. Let us assume two cases; the first, where India exports manufactured goods and imports primary commodities, and the second where it exports primary commodities in order to pay for imports of capital goods and other machinery.

Consider the first case, where India trades with a foreign nation that produces primary products for export and imports manufactured goods. Let the two countries be termed 'I' and 'F' respectively. The surplus in F's primary sector must correspond to the requirements of I's industrial sector for raw materials in the production process as well as for the consumption requirements of its workers. Due to the elimination of the profit motive in I, there would be no need for a continuous shift of the burden onto F's workers in order to reconcile competing claims to the total output in I; stability in I does not require the constant exploitation of workers in F. Yet the claims of the workers in F may still be squeezed if the physical output of F's primary sector falls (due to adverse supply shocks, natural disasters, droughts etc), or if the demand from I is greater than given physical surplus of F (determined by the capital stock and the capital-output ratio, both variables which are given at the beginning of any period).¹⁰

If the workers in F are unorganized and unable to press for their demands, then they might find their incomes squeezed in order to meet the demand from I. The socialist nation cannot be blamed if such a pattern of exploitation manifests itself; however, it must keep in mind that there is a possibility of such exploitation occurring as a result of its actions. The conditions that give rise to such exploitation may be inherent to F; low agricultural productivity, a high labour-land ratio, pre-class identities etc. Nevertheless, there are international implications to the domestic development model followed by one nation, and it is not something that can easily be ignored.

If workers in the primary producing sector of F were in a position to push for sustained increase in wages, the increase in prices that would result could possibly lead to instability in I due to an increase in the prices of raw materials and articles of consumption¹¹. The stability of I cannot be taken for granted just because it follows a socialist path of development; the international context must be studied as well.

The above case is mainly applicable for a nation that has been able to accumulate capital successfully and develop a solid capital base. Let us consider the second case which is a more realistic case for a developing nation like India. Here I requires capital goods and machinery from F, and exports primary commodities in order to pay for its essential imports.

Let us assume that the workers in I's primary sector press for larger claims to the final output, thereby increasing the price of their output. The cost of raw materials and consumption goods for F increases, resulting in an increase in the unit prime costs for the output of F's industrial sector. Workers in the industrial sector of F press for higher wages since the given wage does not allow them the desired level of consumption. As a result, assuming that prices are determined by a fixed mark-up, the cost of manufactured goods goes up, leading to an increase in the price of capital goods that I wishes to import. There might not be any change in the terms of trade at all, and I may not be able to import a larger quantity of goods in the new regime as compared to the earlier situation.

If workers in I's primary producing sector are unwilling to act as shock absorbers to ensure stability in F, the outcome would be accelerating inflation in F and a loss of stability. The prices of I's imports would also shoot up, leading to pressures on its balance of payments. Since the presence of unified labour in I is a threat to the stability of F, there is no telling what measures – political or economic – F would take recourse to in order to ensure stability once more. The alternative is for I to bunker down and withstand the siege, or search out other partners who are willing to engage in trade on a fairer, non-exploitative basis. The international implications must be engaged with if I is to chart for itself a different pattern of development.

The Real Structure of Dependency and its Implications for Development

The fact that the capitalist mode of production can never lead to an increase in welfare globally throws doubt on the proposition that individual nations can achieve a high level of development if they tweak and fine tune the capitalist system within their own borders. For a developing nation caught in this exploitative relationship, it may very well be able to *grow* – in the sense of industrializing and accumulating capital – but it may never be able to *develop*, if by the term we mean an improvement in socio-economic conditions. The existence of the reserve army of labour in the rural sector might help industrialization in the developing nation, which is aided by the fact that prices of primary commodities are kept in check. The growth of the industrial sector may be determined by other factors (the investment decisions of capitalists, the tendency to consume domestic goods by the domestic elite, export demand for the developing nation's manufactures etc), but there is no doubt that it is aided by the squeezing of primary sector workers.

Thus there is no need to necessarily posit that *growth* might be

hampered due to the linking of the developing economy with the developed. The developing nation does suffer due to this relationship in that its primary commodity workers have their claims squeezed, but this does not necessarily entail that its capital accumulation suffers. Of course, there are clear limits to its ability to industrialize and accumulate capital; the upper bound is determined by the fact that the reserve army of labour cannot fall below a certain level such that it fails to act as a stabilizer¹². While the international context does impose severe constraints for the developing nation, it serves the developed nations by allowing for their greater accumulation without any threat of instability. Seen in this respect, we might tentatively draw an interesting conclusion – *it is actually the developed nations that are dependent on the developing nations in order to ensure stability, both economically and politically*. The fact that developing nations are counseled by international institutions to specialize in production of primary commodities in which they enjoy a ‘comparative advantage’ serves a double purpose; not only does it lead to an increase in consumption *only for the developed nation and not the developing* (since most agricultural goods produced by developing nations cannot be produced by the developed ones (U. Patnaik, 2005)), it allows for stability in the developed nation through the squeezing of the wage claims of the workers in that sector¹³. The rate of growth of the primary commodity producing sector (which produces mainly for export) is tethered to the rate of growth of the manufacturing sector in the developed world, and hence it cannot expand autonomously in order to absorb the reserve army of labour¹⁴.

There have been several authors looking at the problem of development in the post-colonial context, where the patterns of exploitation are not as explicit as in the colonial era. This idea of development being a function of the international relationship between different nations is one that has found expression in the ideas of Raul Prebisch and in the writings of the dependency school. The thesis of Prebisch is well known; international trade led to a deterioration of the terms of trade against the primary producers, as the benefits of technical progress in the metropolis (or the developed world) were distributed asymmetrically between nations. The reduction of prices for primary commodities was not matched by a reduction of prices for manufactured goods, the benefits of technical progress being appropriated by profits. This worsened the situation for the ‘periphery’, since it would have had to export a larger amount of primary products in order to purchase the same amount of manufactured goods from the metropolis.

There has been a vast literature on the idea of dependency; despite the differences amongst authors, the central point of the dependency

hypothesis would be to state that development and underdevelopment implies a definite "relationship of inequality" between nations (Frank, 1978). A summary reading of dependency theory would state that the capitalism and the forging of external exchange relations had the effect of distorting the economy of the periphery by generating a production structure that produced solely for foreign demand. The patterns of international trade lead to a transfer of surplus from the periphery to the metropolis (Hopkins, 1975 and Dos Santos, 1970).

The common strand in both the above arguments would be that the conditions of underdevelopment in the periphery cannot be seen in isolation from development in the metropolis. International trade based on ideas of comparative advantage and free trade are not beneficial to all, serving only to advance the benefit of the industrialized nations that export manufactures to the detriment of the producers of the primary product. Notwithstanding the differences between different strands of dependency theory (as well as the structuralist ideas inspired by Prebisch), the implication of both can be summed up as follows; if integration with the international system leads to a drain of wealth (or at the very least prevents the growth of wealth), then the solution lies to delink from the rest of the world, and adopt an inward-looking policy of industrialization in an attempt to keep the wealth within the borders. While theorists of the dependency school stressed the need for socialism, Prebisch advocated a strategy of industrialization wherein imports would be curtailed through the promotion of industries that could produce domestic substitutes for foreign goods in an attempt to adjust essential imports to the exports of these countries.

There is no doubt that foreign trade would still play an important role in those nations that attempt to delink themselves from the international order. As Prebisch writes, "...the greater the exports from Latin America the greater may be the rate of its economic development." (Prebisch, 1987:152-53). What is of interest though is the fact that while the diagnosis is of an unjust international order, the cure ends up focusing again on the nation-state, assuming that a nation that voluntarily attempts to delink itself from the international order can carry out its development process by concentrating mainly on the internal dynamics of change. *In forming a strategy for development, much like the methodology for the diagnosis of underdevelopment itself, the international context must be looked at from the perspective of forming a comprehensive system within which the developing country is situated.*

The Role of Common Markets

definitely superior to unfettered and free markets as a means of development for a developing nation, there are several constraints that might render it unworkable. Capitalism as a system requires the presence of a reserve army of labour in order to ensure that wages remain fixed at a subsistence level. The only reason why some advanced industrial nations have been able to achieve a higher standard of living and greater levels of employment for its workforce is due to the fact that these reserve armies of labour exist beyond its own borders.

Any attempt by any developing nation that specializes in primary commodity production to bring about higher wages for its workforce might end up increasing the price of its exports, thereby bringing about inflation both internationally and domestically. An increase in the prices of raw material imports would increase the prices of goods and services in the developed nation, as well as increasing the prices of capital goods and manufactured goods that the developing nation imports. For the stability of the system as a whole and for the maintenance of high employment levels and low inflation, it is necessary that a large mass of the world's population remain impoverished.

A nation that attempts to go it alone and compete in the international market might find itself being stuck in a colonial-era pattern of trade. The important question that must be asked is: can a country escape such a fate by relying on its own resources alone? Recent history of the postcolonial era is replete with instance of countries that attempted measures such as import-substituting industrialization finally succumbing and giving in to the logic of free market capitalism. While some countries have managed to secure high growth rates as a result (India is one such country), the assertion that they have managed to secure a better standard of living for its people is one that cannot be maintained under serious scrutiny.

It is imperative, therefore, for developing countries such as India to explore the possibility of common markets in order to ensure regimes of equitable trade. Developing countries must attempt to strike broad alliances and co-operate so as to bring about trading patterns that maximize welfare for all parties concerned, such that the domestic labour force in each nation is fully employed. Free movement of labour would also form an important component of such a strategy in order to ensure that labour is not trapped in certain low-wage areas, subsidizing the other partners by keeping the prices of these areas' exports low. It is plain to see that such a pattern of international co-operation is incompatible with capitalism, as capitalism requires the presence of a reserve army of labour, and strict restrictions on international migration of unskilled labour helps develop and maintain such a reserve army in certain areas of

the world. Moreover, the fact that trading and production patterns would have to be carefully co-ordinated between nations means that an anarchic method of production such as free-market capitalism would be unable to deliver such an outcome. The discussion of common markets in this respect – or, for that matter, any strategy that seeks to ensure higher standards of welfare for all concerned – is one that cannot be undertaken within the framework of capitalism.

It is obvious that there are severe problems with such a formulation of common markets. Firstly, it implicitly makes the assumption that all nations would have to follow some form of socialism, and thus the question of whether developing nations that follow some form of capitalism, whether regulated or unregulated, would be allowed to participate in such a market. Secondly, and related to the first point, how does one choose the nations that must be involved in such a market when one realizes that nations differ widely in economic strength even amongst the developing nations? Consider a possible scenario, where India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (say) decide to form such a market. If the need does arise, should India, as the strongest partner in such a market, tolerate a possible increase in imports from Pakistan and Bangladesh in order to allow their industries a greater boost without a corresponding increase in its exports? Thirdly, though this should not be thought of as an inherent logical flaw against the idea of common markets, the administrative and logistical problems of co-ordinating policy decisions across national boundaries would be considerable. Finally, the free movement of labour across borders would probably lead to frictions and conflict if the movement of labour is not accompanied by the expansion of employment opportunities in equal measure.

There is no doubt that there are immense problems with such an idea, especially in the context of praxis. Also, this in no way makes the claim that national struggles within particular nations for independence from exploitation must wait until global struggles are organized (P.Patnaik, 2001: 255). This essay merely makes an attempt to study the international forces that might threaten the achievement of socialism in one nation, and states that the ultimate aim must be to think of true development in an international context, without losing focus on local aspirations and without submerging the local to the will of the trans-national. Greater co-operation between the developing nations is necessary in order to ensure that no one nation gets stuck in a pattern of trade and production that sacrifices the welfare of its people for the stability of the developed world.

The prescriptions for development that are advanced in this essay might be criticized for being too idealistic or utopian. This essay is an

attempt to locate the problems of development in a specific historic and international context; the idea of development advanced above that follows from such an analysis is grounded therefore in practical considerations, based on an understanding of how the world works. As for idealism, this author freely admits to the charge. If he wasn't, he'd never have been able to dream of a better world for all.

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Notes

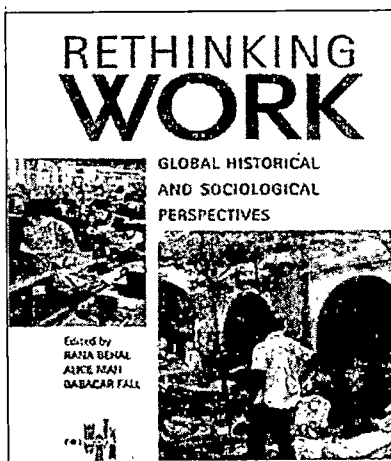
- 1 I would like to thank Gayatri Nair, Prathamesh Thuraga, Vivek V. Narayan, C.J.Kuncheria and Vibha Iyer for their comments on an earlier draft without implicating them in the final result.
- 2 Some, like Kalecki (1972), would argue that the concept of full employment for the entire labour force is incompatible with capitalism. This idea will be discussed below.
- 3 The discussion of the 'enabling State' in the Economic Survey of the Government of India (2009-10: 22-23) corresponds closely to the neo-classical idea of minimal State interference.
- 4 This is an explicit rejection of the idea of comparative advantage. Specializing in agricultural or raw material production only tends to perpetuate the problem of poverty for poor nations, characterized as they are by diminishing returns.
- 5 The British markets were characterised by heavy tariffs for nearly a century from 1775 onwards, yet its Asian colonies were "...compulsorily and completely trade liberalized throughout the period." (U.Patnaik, 2005: 38).
- 6 In Kenya, coffee began to be planted on a wide scale in order to ensure the British did not lose out on the worldwide coffee trade following the collapse of coffee output in Sri Lanka (Wolff, 1974).
- 7 Britain's colonies came in handy as the surplus extracted from them (mainly India) was used by Britain to settle her deficits with the advanced industrial nations whose goods she imported (Saul, 1960). The colonial countries played a vital role in allowing for the settlement of multilateral trade in the colonial era.
- 8 High labour productivity would not pose any detriment to the absorption of labour reserves if the surpluses generated in the highly productive sectors could be channelled into demand for labour-intensive goods or services. But whether such an outcome would necessarily arise under capitalism is another matter.
- 9 Such an outcome is also contingent on the fact that India would have to turn its

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- back on a 'free-market' model of development with patterns of international trade decided on the basis of comparative advantage, and seek to industrialize according to Reinert's model. This would call for an active role played by the State, a strategy which may have undesirable consequences, as outlined above.
- 10 This argument may be more valid for agricultural commodities rather than raw materials. As a general rule, we may posit that exploitation of the workers in F may occur if demand from I increases (over several periods) at a rate faster than investment and output in the primary commodity producing sector of F.
 - 11 Let us assume prices are set in the socialist economy with a mark-up over unit costs, the mark-up corresponding to the desired share of investment. If raw material prices rise, then either inflation occurs, if the share of investment is to be kept constant, or the share of investment reduces, if the real wages are to be preserved. This is not meant to be an accurate description of pricing in the socialist economy. This model of pricing has been adopted simply to show the possibility of instability occurring in a socialist economy due to an increase in the prices of raw material imports.
 - 12 A high rate of output growth could be achieved with no reduction in the reserve army of labour if labour productivity increases at a faster rate than that of investment (P.Patnaik, 2007). The greater the rate of adoption of labour-saving technology in the periphery, the faster it can grow without affecting the stability of the metropolis.
 - 13 A country that exports manufactured goods can also serve as a source of stability if the wages of its workers are depressed; China is a prime example. What is of interest, though, is whether there are inherent tendencies in the primary producing sector towards the squeezing of incomes. In the agricultural sector, we may list a few; the fact that developing nations are characterized by high labour-land ratios, etc. Unlike in the factory, agricultural labourers are not brought into close contact with each other over appreciable periods of time, a condition necessary for the formation of unions and political consciousness. The seasonal character of production and migration also implies that workers are permanently unsettled and always on the move; this does not allow them to come together as a cohesive force to press for their demands. The presence of pre-class identities (like caste, tribal affiliations etc) in the rural sector also prevents workers from pressing for their demands, though this is not to say that this factor may not be operative in the cities as well.
 - 14 Low rates of growth in the primary producing sector are compatible with high industrial sector growth if the incomes of workers and petty producers in that sector are continuously depressed.

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Where Politics and Morals Meet: Keeping Faith with Human Rights

Sasheej Hegde

The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are one and the same.

- Gilles Deleuze

Aakash Singh Rathore and Alex Cistelean (ed.), *Wronging Rights? Philosophical Challenges for Human Rights*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2011, vii + 216 pp., Hb Rs. 695.

Considerations on the limits and possibilities of the idea and practice of human rights must begin by making a broad distinction between a philosophical approach to human rights and a political one. Where a philosophical approach asks what human rights are, why we have them (or do not have them), what they are based on, what they include, and so on, a political approach starts basically with the problem of realizing human rights. The former approach bases rights on something outside the political realm – whether it be human nature, rationality, needs, capabilities, vulnerabilities etc., whereas for the latter perspective the theoretical validity of human rights is of little currency if they have no effect (indeed, that when rights are respected, their deeper bases tend to seem less pressing). There is necessarily some connection between these two approaches, of course: the inability to realize a regime of rights or to render them effective can remove much legitimacy from a socio-political order, making it all too easy to portray the socio-political order as arbitrary and unjust – a portrayal massively enhanced by what is now a long series of state failures and civil social interventions. But the mood of contemporary intellectual opinion now tends to make the connection *absolute*, to say that nothing but disaster can occur if the philosophical approach to human rights is not fused with the political approach (and vice versa).

The importance of the book under review is that it suggests that more constructive scenarios working off both specific philosophical challenges and concrete political demands (or stakes) are at least possible. The editorial arrangement might seem a bit contrived and heavy-handed though, but the individual contributions are not. The collection has essays by

Upendra Baxi, Wendy Brown, Ratna Kapur, Jacques Ranciere, Richard Rorty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Slavoj Žižek, each ruminating on the claims of human rights and the 'politics' appropriate to it, while the editors, Aakash Singh Rathore and Alex Cistelean, formulate a classificatory schema between and across the range of these writings. Doubtless, the schema imposed is a dubious one, with the contributions of Baxi, Kapur and Spivak held to represent the 'postcolonialist' vantage point of a critique of human rights and Žižek and Ranciere taken to represent a 'post-Althusserian' perspective on the question. Straddling these two ends is a putatively ascribed middle ground – termed fuzzily an 'American interlude' – in the form of Rorty and Brown. The two editors each seek to mediate a conversation between them, with Cistelean problematizing, through the terminology of the post-Althusserian critique, the terms of the postcolonial take on human rights and Rathore wending his way through and beyond the post-Althusserian perspective via the postcolonial route.

It is certainly not this flawed structuring and mediation that I am interested to comment on here in the course of the review article. Rather, a core concern that runs through the essays that comprise the volume is the argument for a more nuanced understanding of human rights and its associated cultures of criticism and knowledge.¹ Certainly one ought not to be misconstruing the critique of human rights as a complete abandonment or simple denunciation of rights. Indeed, the thesis of this collection is present in its provocatively posed and deliberative title, *Wronging Rights? Philosophical Challenges for Human Rights*. But its importance is still greater in theoretical terms. Considering that human rights activism, both in India and transnationally, is still in the process of being consolidated, it has much to learn and reflectively articulate, and perhaps also consciously strive to conceptualize its practice.

The fear of foundations

A standard move in the vast literature on human rights advocacy has been to claim that there is a large gulf between 'ground-level' human rights problems and philosophical disputation about human rights which has to be bridged before one can discuss whether the latter is adequate to the former. Needless to say, this is not a trajectory that the volume under consideration is interested to pursue. In fact, many of the standard objections to human rights such as that they constitute an abstract universality far removed from the real, complex social relations, experiences and problems of human life, or that the human rights doctrine is too individualistic, according moral priority to the value of the individual over that of the social and treating human beings as isolated

atoms, as units disconnected from (or at best externally connected to) each other, also that the human rights doctrine and the human rights movement, by neglecting human obligations, disregard what is fundamental to morality and to social life and are therefore unsuitable to protect the human interests they proclaim (in that they fail to specify who has what obligation to take, what action to defend the rights declared and accordingly fail to institutionalize and render effective the necessary obligations) are all seen to represent a form of empty 'moralism'.² More specifically, the philosophical treatment of the idea of human rights on offer here exhibit what can be characterised as a fear of foundations. On this view, broadly, what counts is not the argument for or against human rights, but rather the discursive community in which those who converse about rights are already located. The latter are already disposed to accept the normative force of certain sorts of moral or legal assertions, including rights.

Indeed, from such a view, the lack of an inflated, ontological foundation for human rights is an advantage, not a deficiency; and along this axis too the volume under review can be seen to constitute an interesting pathway into the question of the limits and possibilities of human rights. One may, in this context, consider the work of Michael Ignatieff, arguably a penetrating diagnosis of the theory and practice of human rights in recent times. Where for some, such as Ronald Dworkin, the idea of human rights is based on a quasi-foundational ascription of sacredness to human life, Ignatieff attempts to go beyond and rejects the foundational language of sacredness altogether. "What is so sacred about human beings?" he asks, while going on to state: "To this humanists must reply, if they wish to be consistent, that there is nothing sacred about human beings, nothing entitled to worship or ultimate respect".³ For Ignatieff, human rights are not tokens of some putatively sacred nature of persons nor are they an "ultimate trump card in moral argument"; they are simply the language in which we negotiate our interests with one another, in which we assert our strongest and most crucial interests, none of which, however, are exempt from "intensely difficult trade-offs and compromises". As he observes: "To be a rights-bearer is not to hold some sacred inviolability but to commit oneself to live in a community where rights conflicts are adjudicated through persuasion, rather than violence". The affirmation of the language of rights indicates participation in a linguistic and moral-political community committed to deliberation. Accordingly, rights do not describe some putative attributes of persons, whose personhood is sacred; rather, they are functions of language usage that signify moves in a community of a certain kind. Without doubt, Ignatieff does not lament this condition; on the contrary,

he celebrates it: "Foundational beliefs of all kinds have been a long-standing menace to the human rights of ordinary individuals".

There is another kind of repudiation of foundations for human rights, not entirely unrelated to the preceding ones, but expressing itself in a different idiom to which it may be useful to make a brief reference, what one might term Burkean traditionalism. On this view, memorably articulated in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, it is misguided to ascribe rights to persons in a universal, culture- or nation-invariant way. There is no such thing as man; there are only Frenchmen, Englishmen, and so on, and each lives within streams of constitutional traditions and institutions that make for their historic liberties. "We... wish ... to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers", writes Burke, for the revolutionary assertion of the rights of man, in its presumptive universality, "separate[s] and tear[s] asunder the bands of ... subordinate community and ... dissolve[s] it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary particles".⁴ For Burke, although discussion of natural right such as is found in the social contract thinkers is not nonsense, it is plainly inadequate. Right becomes meaningful only in the context of a historic, particular civilization with a moral vision of a virtuous life and a developed culture of political institutions that secure humane and civil association. Accordingly, the talk of rights outside of such a context fastens onto brute claims to self-preservation, which, when translated out of the state of nature into the world in which we actually live, subverts those moral visions and developed cultures and makes both morality and politics impossible.

Contemporary expositors of this orientation include Michael Oakeshott and Roger Scruton. For reasons of brevity and accessibility, I shall limit myself to the latter, a more contemporary figure. Scruton is "loath to found the political enterprise upon any idea of 'universal' or 'natural' rights". Although it is evident that there are just and unjust regimes, good and bad states, and that the term 'human rights' is a convenient shorthand for marking that distinction, Scruton is categorical that such rights should not be reified into attributes or possessions of their putative bearers. He deems it as "neither feasible politics nor plausible doctrine" to think the difference between just and unjust states as resting on "a simple body of abstract rights, which can be specified for all human beings, independently of their origin and allegiance", while going on to implore categorically: "There are only rights where there are obligations; and whose is the obligation to provide?" Scruton concedes that the UN Charter of Human Rights contains many moral truths, but asks: "What social arrangement, what community of common interests, what mutual understanding between people, gives rise to the political

obligation to comply with it?"⁵ Rights, on this register, are seen to be empty without a moral community of obligation and duty, nor can they be exercised independently of the protection afforded by a political order. Accordingly, the political order is primary, and the claim of rights on the theoretical imagination is subordinate. It should be reiterated that neither Burke nor Scruton eschew foundations in a historical sense; both even affirm a foundation in a natural sense – Burke in the idea of an historic constitution that has adapted itself to the necessities of primordial life and of human nature and Scruton in a minimal conception of natural justice. But both significantly reject the universal and absolute claims of human rights that arise as states and peoples adapt their own universal affirmations to the rights-oriented framework of the Enlightenment.

Now, of course, the essays comprising the volume under consideration have no such anxieties when it comes to negotiating the space of human rights. The fear of foundations – which, as our foregoing delineation has tried to account for, takes several forms – is here transmuted into a demand for a new (or novel) outlook on human rights. Thus Alex Cistelean in his introductory essay ('Which Critique of Human Rights? Evaluating the Postcolonial and the Post-Althusserian Alternatives') in the volume under review speaks of the imperative of a "Hegelian reversal" to the legacy of human rights, one that would avoid (as he puts it) the "moralizing direction" of the critique of the abstract nature of rights, a moralizing that consists of a "constant attack on the formal, empty, abstract nature of the declaration of human rights, and an emphasis on the possible alternatives to it, namely, the plural, rich, vivid, authentic particular cultures, narratives, situations" (pp.3-4). Indeed, the founding gesture of a fresh outlook on human rights that the volume as a whole is seeking to mediate is precisely this: namely, "not all critique of the abstract nature of rights has to lead in a moralizing direction" (p.4).

One may, accordingly, characterise this approach as a form of critical pragmatism, but I would much rather prefer the lead contained in the suggestion of an interesting contemporary political philosopher, Duncan Ivison, who in formulating an alternative approach to the question of rights speaks of the imperative of approaching rights *naturalistically*.⁶ In what follows, we will attempt to delineate in broad terms the attributes of this naturalistic standpoint on rights, in the process going on to represent some of the broad arguments offered by the individual contributors to the volume under consideration. In perspective are contending models of the politics of human rights, some of which are borne out by the volume and some which evade the naturalistic framework on offer. A final foray will try to sound the limits of a naturalistic understanding of

rights, as indeed the fear of foundations that constitutes its critical point of departure.

Approaching rights naturalistically

Attractive as this fear of foundations might be – and notwithstanding its various forms – it is always vulnerable to a powerful objection that has its origins in variations of Marx's critique of liberal rights in *On the Jewish Question*. Broadly, Marx had argued that liberal rights were a product of the relations of power constitutive of bourgeois society and are thus unable to provide the grounds for an effective critique of the inequality and alienation within that society. This critique has been extended in interesting ways – some of which underlies the inaugural gestures of the volume under review – even as Marx's founding insight has been subjected to a fresh reappraisal.⁷ Generally speaking yet, philosophers understand rights as expressions of a particular kind of a justification or demand that certain important or urgent interests be protected or promoted in particular (especially institutional) ways. Thus from within the claim that "X is a (human) right" and the claim that "A has a right to X" – where A represents a particular agent or group entity at a particular place and point in time – 'rights' (whether political/legal or moral, with 'human rights' falling somewhere in between) entail contradictory possibilities. They can work so as to align individual conduct with various kinds of particular social, political, economic and cultural norms, and they can also structure a range of possible actions, even those meant to challenge prevalent social norms. All the same, as Duncan Ivison has asserted elsewhere, a crucial issue is often not only the absence or presence of a legally enforceable right but of the social and political conditions surrounding it. As he urges –

To which interests, reasons, norms, or capacities do rights refer? How and in what context is the right exercised and by whom? Will it be an individual, a group? Will it be exercised by the agent herself or by a representative? And how will it be enforced, and by whom? Strictly or informally? By the state or by other means? In other words what are the social, historical, and norm-based "surrounds" of the claim? What conventions and norms govern the uptake of a rights claim?

- while going on to state that "rights are by definition a social practice", in that "(t)hey simultaneously presuppose various kinds of social arrangements and patterns of interaction, as well as reinforce and help bring various institutions and ways of acting into being".⁸

To be sure, rights empower different individuals and groups unevenly, depending on their ability to exercise the powers, capacities, or immunities to which the rights refer.

Specifically from within this critical disposition about rights, one has to contend with how to understand the relation between human rights and politics, a relation complicated by the fact that even as human rights are meant to protect and promote the freedom and dignity of every human being, they can yet give rise to a politics that achieves the very opposite (in terms of empowering the powerful, rendering their use of power arbitrary and unaccountable, and creating dependencies among beneficiaries). To be sure, the essays reproduced in the volume under review give evidence of the hijacking of human rights for projects that seem to contradict their spirit: human rights becoming a constitutive part of the arsenal of power rather than a medium for the critique of power. The scholarship in view is specifically concerned to address the abstract universality of human rights as a historically concrete form of 'discriminatory universality'. Thus the claim underscoring Ratna Kapur ('Human Rights in the 21st Century: Take a Walk on the Dark Side'), to the effect that "assertions about the universality of human rights simply deny the reality of those whom they claim to represent and speak for, disclaiming their histories and imposing another's through a hegemonizing move" (p.36). Likewise, the contention undergirding Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ('Righting Wrongs') that the idea of 'human rights' is "not only about having or claiming a right or a set of rights; it is also about righting wrongs, about being the dispenser of these rights" (p.79) and that, consequently, the idea "may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of social Darwinism – the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit – and the possibility of an alibi" (pp.79-80). Indeed, even as Spivak is concerned to highlight that "'human rights culture' runs on unremitting Northern-ideological pressure, even when it is from the South; that there is a real epistemic discontinuity between the Southern human rights advocates and those whom they protect" (p.83), she insists on "supplemental pedagogy" on both sides and urges that "human rights activism should be supplemented by an education that should suture the habits of democracy onto the earlier cultural formation" (p.96).

Alternatively, we have the emphasis in Upendra Baxi ('Critiquing Rights: The Politics of Identity and Difference') who argues that, even as one may contest the politics of the universality of human rights, "it is simply unwarranted to ascribe to contemporary human rights any sort of 'essentialism' that reduces the conception of being human to any prede-

terminated attributes, properties, or essences" (p.63). Specifically, Baxi is interested to deliver on the "radical difference between the 'modern' and 'contemporary' human rights discursivity", which (as he maintains) "lies precisely in the fact that the latter is not founded upon any predetermined conception of what constitutes a human 'essence'" (ibid.). According to him, while the normativity of 'modern' affirmations of human rights did "emanate from the 'Western' notions of Enlightenment that constituted the word 'human', essentially in the image of a male white individual bourgeois colonizer" (p.63), the same line of indictment may not hold for the contemporary affirmation of human rights; and, accordingly, that the latter paradigm of rights "postulates, and progressively recognizes, that the notion 'human' being, and being human, is itself a process of continual redefinition" (p.64). Interestingly, Slavoj Žižek ('Against Human Rights') in his contribution is concerned to articulate a variation to this point about contemporary human rights. Thus, while admitting to the content that gives the notion of human rights its specific ideological spin – in his words, "universal human rights are effectively the right of white, male property owners to exchange freely on the market, exploit workers and women, and exert political domination" (p.164) – Žižek pointedly admits that this "identification of the particular content that hegemonizes the universal form is, however, only half the story" (ibid.); indeed that it is "not enough to make the well-worn Marxist point about the gap between the ideological appearance of the universal legal form and the particular interests that effectively sustain it" (p.165). As Žižek – following Jacques Rancière, another contributor to the collection under review – puts it "the form is never 'mere' form but involves a dynamics of its own, which leaves traces in the materiality of social life" (p.165). For him (as indeed for Rancière), the 'gap' between formal democracy – the Rights of Man, political freedoms – and the material reality of domination and exploitation, indeed of human suffering, even as it can be "read in the standard 'symptomatic' way: formal democracy is a necessary but illusory expression of a concrete social reality of exploitation and class domination" (p.166), can also be read in the more subversive sense of a tension in which the 'appearance' of *egaliberte* is not a 'mere appearance' but contains an efficacy of its own, which allows it to set in motion the rearticulation of actual socio-economic relations by way of their progressive 'politicization' (ibid.).

The key move here, it must be noted, is not to take the form of abstract universality for granted – as, for instance, Kapur or even Spivak seem to do, and to an extent Baxi – but rather to pose the question of the emergence of the form of abstract universality itself; even, more point-

edly, to ask the question in what conditions do individuals experience themselves as subjects of universal human rights. The answer, for Žižek (with a nod, of course, to Marx's analysis of 'commodity fetishism'), is that "in the specific social conditions of commodity exchange and the global market economy, 'abstraction' becomes the direct feature of actual social life, the way concrete individuals behave and relate to their fate and to their social surroundings" (p.165); and, what is more, that the "concrete existence of universality is, therefore, the individual without a proper place in the social edifice" (ibid.). The mode of appearance of universality is thus, for Žižek, "an extremely violent act of disrupting the preceding organic poise" (p.165), the moment really of politics (conceived not quite as a negotiation of particular interests, but as a field of political subjectivization). As he avows:

Far from being pre-political, 'universal human rights' designate the precise space of politicization proper; what they amount to is the right of universality as such – the right of a political agent to assert its radical non-coincidence with itself (in its particular identity), to posit itself as the 'supernumerary', the one with no proper place in the social edifice, and thus as an agent of universality of the social itself (p.167).

Indeed, this latter axis of politicization and political subjectivization finds sharper commentary in the contribution by Jacques Rancière ('Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?'). Answering precisely to the question formulated in his title, Rancière attests pointedly that "the Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not" (p.174). Even more emphatically, he shows that this non-coincidence with itself of the subject of human rights opens up the sphere of human rights as a space of genuine political subjectivization, one not at all blocked by the abstract nature of rights but in fact made possible by the formal inscription of universality and equality. Thus, as Rancière would have it, "(t)he Rights of Man do not become void by becoming the rights of those who cannot actualize them" (p.179); rather: "The strength of those rights lies in the back-and-forth movement between the first inscription of the right and the dissensual stage on which it is put to test" (p.178).⁹

Of course, the volume's perspective is not exhausted by the kind of significance that is to be attributed to the abstract universality of human rights. Interestingly, this ground of appraisal is further augmented by the individual contributions of the philosopher Richard Rorty and the political theorist Wendy Brown. Rorty ('Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality') begins his reflection on human rights by declaring

human ontology and foundationalism to be outmoded, overtaken by our awareness of our "extraordinary malleability", so that instead of asking what we are, we ask what we can make of ourselves and our world (pp.110-12). Only 'sentimentality', as Rorty would have it, is active in value judgements, especially those that extend consideration to others, and sentimentality relies on malleability – influence through an appeal to emotions works only with malleable natures. Although averring that western morality, cradled by the Enlightenment, gave rise to the present 'human rights culture' and is superior to other moralities in vogue, Rorty does not (and indeed cannot) account for this by reference to a distinctively human, transcultural attribute.

Instead, sidestepping meta-ethical debates about the grounds of moral beliefs, he advocates the pragmatic view of 'efficiency': that the task of western humanists is to make their own culture more self-conscious, more powerful, and more widely adopted, in order to achieve the promise of an enlightened utopia (p.113). For Rorty, a moral institution such as human rights does not owe its emergence to increased moral knowledge, but to "hearing sad and sentimental stories" (p.114). What is more, susceptibility to these stories is not presumed to be an inborn natural response; it is acquired with increased "wealth, literacy and leisure", which (as Rorty maintains) made possible an acceleration in the rate of moral progress in the western world (p.117). He allows that people untouched by the Enlightenment have a concept of the good, but it is a bad good, being little more than a "primitive parochialism" that causes them to see only their group members as good human beings and all outsiders as bad ones (p.122). All the same, for him, we should not see these people as irrational or depraved, only as 'deprived' (p.123).

To be sure, Rorty does not consider western concepts of the good as more universal, only as better, having grown in a richer soil (as he would have it). In fact, his agnosticism in matters of moral value does not extend to comparative judgements of better or worse, though the judgement is always based on sentiment. Thus his argument about sentimental education has a soft centre in more ways than one.¹⁰ Though Rorty claims that he is pursuing a practical argument – simply 'taking care of the future', as he says – he is in reality presenting a philosophical argument about pragmatism as the best way forward and sentimentality as the only strategy in moral and political matters.

Wendy Brown ('The Most We Can Hope For ...': Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism'), on the other hand, is concerned to challenge not merely the language of rights but the very discursive framework which maintains and circulates rights in contemporary politics. She clearly goes beyond the notion that rights might no longer be very

helpful, even as she tries to demonstrate that rights today codify modalities of subordination and exclusion. In a passionate engagement with the work alluded to earlier on in our review, namely, Michael Ignatieff, Brown calls attention to the fact that “if rights secure the possibility of living without fear of express state coercion, they do not thereby decrease the overall power and reach of the state nor do they enhance the collective power of the citizenry to determine the contours and content of social, economic and political justice” (p.142). Given that power comes in various forms – beyond or outside its sovereign or juridical form – rights are not just defences against social and political power, but are “as an aspect of governmentality, a crucial aspect of power’s aperture” (ibid.). Brown is particularly concerned to deliver on the fundamental paradox of rights – what she has termed elsewhere as the paradox between its ‘universal idiom’ and its ‘local effects’¹¹ – that is, the interplay between the apparent freedom to act in a certain way and the regulatory, discursive and normative context within which that ‘free action’ takes place. Along this register, she poses a frontal challenge to human rights activism as “something of an antipolitics”, taking their shape “as a moral discourse centred on pain and suffering rather than political discourse of comprehensive justice” (p.134).

Clearly, then, for the orientations summarized above, rights are fundamentally *social* in character – in that they presuppose various kinds of interactions among people, and thus various social arrangements including norms and institutions – and *relational* (in the sense of marking out the moral importance of the separateness of persons while simultaneously introducing new ways of relating to others). The language and practice of rights presuppose a wider account of the social and political order in which they are to be situated. To the extent that rights presuppose community (or, even, communities), the ‘human’ of rights – and, indeed, of ‘human rights’ – picks out the scope of these rights, even as it does not specify either their content or the characteristics in virtue of which they are to be applied. It is important to reiterate here that this indeterminacy is their strength: on the one hand, it prohibits the arbitrary exclusion of any person or group from the community and, on the other hand, it represents a moment of excess in virtue of which the collective identity of the community can always be put in question. In other words, the ‘human’ of human rights opens up, and keeps open, the space that separates a community from itself.¹² Woven thus, this complex and inevitably diverse ground of argument places in perspective what we are terming as a naturalistic approach to rights, one clearly set apart from a foundationalism about rights (as alluded to in the first section of our review), and translating into a kind of philosophical anthropology which

aims to try and understand human agency as part of nature (as opposed to standing fundamentally above or against it) while not itself reducible to a narrow scientific conception of nature.

Given that the idea of rights is arguably the most important and most frequently deployed in our armature of normative concepts (that is, concepts that facilitate our evaluative interventions in ethical, political and social matters pertaining to how we ought to live, how we ought to arrange social and political institutions, and how we ought to understand the nature of the relationship between political society and the individual), a naturalistic approach to the question would entail connecting the political and social aspects of rights. As Ivison formulates it, the naturalistic approach implores us to allow empirically informed views about human nature and the world we live in – especially views that are given to us by the social scientific study of humans and their existence as social and cultural agents – to guide our study of rights in particular as well as our study of normative phenomena more generally.¹³ One of the payoffs that Ivison rightly claims for this approach is that it emphasizes that rights (and other political values) have to be argued for and justified; they are neither self-evident nor self-validating, serving at once as conduits of power and as sources of protection from power. In fact, considering that human beings are complex assemblages of desire and affect, which shape our rational preferences and beliefs, there is a need to grasp the complex interactions between these different aspects in relation to claims about rights: “we need to understand how various ‘provisional fixed points’ in judgments about rights are formed in the first place and especially the historical, cultural, and normative character of those judgments”.¹⁴

Framing the politics of human rights

Let me now turn to extending and amending aspects of the approach we are here reading into (and quite clearly also endorsing off) the volume under consideration. Is it possible to retain the central insight of this (or any such) naturalistic reading – that rights constitute a normative order distinguished by its open-ended potential for politicization and democratization – without falling into the trap of substantializing the sphere of politics or reducing the political order to a one-dimensional pole of domination? Is it possible to combine the gains of a naturalism about human rights, with its recognition of the fragility of the political communities to which we belong (whether national or international), with an understanding of the normative force of rights claims as derived from historically available discourses of right? By way of understanding and approach, I want to suggest that it is, though this is not without

implications for the naturalistic consideration of rights formulated in the preceding section. More pointedly, we can take the main ingredients from a certain 'classical' posing of the political problem of human rights famously articulated by Hannah Arendt in the wake of the Second World War.¹⁵ Of particular interest is her framing of human rights as the "right to have rights", a phrase characterized by an interesting deployment of the word 'right' in two distinct ways. There is as much an allusion to 'right' as a *moral* right, something every human being should have, as to rights in the plural, namely, *positive* rights. The theorist Seyla Benhabib (issuing off the reading presented by the constitutional scholar Frank Michelman) has pointed out, the former, that is, moral right is addressed to everyone, and as such has no practical effect, whereas the latter, namely, positive (or political) rights, are guaranteed and correspond to some specific agent's obligation to enforce them.¹⁶ The politics of human rights on this dual register, accordingly, consists in transforming moral rights into effective positive or political rights.

Indeed, as Ingram renders it, Arendt's formulation reframes the problem precisely by turning "the idea of human rights into a practical-political challenge".¹⁷ Arendt does so by taking into account a situation in which human rights manifestly did not work, namely, that of the refugees and stateless persons before, during, and after the Second World War. Contemplating their plight, she juxtaposes a philosophical to a political perspective, and finds the former wanting. As she forcefully observes:

No paradox of contemporary politics is filled with more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as 'inalienable' those human rights which are enjoyed only by the citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves.

Arendt thus reproaches the very idea of 'human rights', pointing out that the 'discrepancy' arose because the philosophers, advocates and practitioners alike forgot the most basic right of all: "the right to have rights". More pointedly, maintaining that "the Rights of Man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be unenforceable ... whenever people appeared who were no longer citizens of any sovereign state", she associates 'a right to have rights' with "a right to belong to some kind of organized community". Like Edmund Burke, whose attack on the vacuity of the French revolution's "rights of man" she praises for its "pragmatic soundness", Arendt's point necessarily is that human rights are an empty abstraction and that only *national* rights are real.

Ingram reminds us that it is on this basis that some commentators have concluded that Arendt is a human rights sceptic who saw hope for effective rights protection only in a revitalization of *national* politics. But,

as he pointedly notes, the problem to which Arendt was alluding is a case where states (and the national politics internal to states) had failed, depriving people of the rights they previously had: "The problem to which 'human', as opposed to 'civic', rights respond is precisely that states can trample on rights, be indifferent to their violation, or be too weak to defend them".¹⁸ The imperative of this politics of human rights, therefore, is how to treat human rights as moral imperatives to be implemented by force; and, what is more, on this interpretation, the politics of rights is the activity of those willing and able to protect them. The deeper paradox, yet, of such a framing of the politics of human rights is a built-in discrepancy between the ends of human rights (equal freedom and dignity) and the means used to implement or secure them (the willingness and ability, really, of the stronger): "human rights seek to protect some from arbitrary or unjust power, but can do so only by summoning another, greater power".¹⁹ Human rights 'belong' to one party, but power is used on their behalf by another. Indeed, while there is a case to be made for limiting the use of power by moral considerations, the translation here being effected by means of this politics of human rights is precisely the idea that power is the sole guarantee of rights, even that rights and their beneficiaries are dependent on a superior, external power. As Ingram formulates: "The politics of human rights is, seemingly of necessity, something the powerful do *for* the powerless". This certainly contradicts the idea – at once moral and political – that rights express the principles of autonomy and equality, while also rendering the rights secured by external intervention to (again, in the eloquent words of Ingram) "not correspond with a *right*, which I can exercise when and how I like, but to a *gift*". But if human rights are to serve the equal freedom of every human being, then surely one cannot be satisfied with domesticating the space of power. Rather, the challenge for a politics of human rights would be to address the imbalances of power, something which a near-philanthropic conception of human rights is wont to avoid.

Needless to say, one would be hard pressed to accept the terms of this framing of the politics of human rights, effacing or short-circuiting as it does Arendt's formula of a 'right to have rights'. It is important to recall that Arendt had described the formula as depending, not on a state or a law, but on "belong(ing) to some kind of organized community". To be sure, most interpreters of Arendt have tended to focus on the idea of 'belonging' and to posit (as we saw in the work of Walzer above, for instance) that only civic rights, guaranteed by a nation-state, are secure. In fact, the 'right to have rights' enunciated as a theoretical possibility and initiated by Arendt in the course of a reflection on the specific plight of stateless persons marks, in its difficulty, a permanent political predica-

ment (or possibility). Consequently, (as Ingram also implores) it is imperative to suggest that Arendt, far from articulating a scepticism about the very idea of human rights, is proposing a change of perspective: rather than considering rights as something guaranteed by an external power like the state, we should regard them as secured by their beneficiaries themselves through their democratic action.

It is important to see that the political urgency and force of Arendt's claims come precisely from their refusal to seek an extra-political standpoint for the right to have rights, as grounded (say) in the human subject, knowledge, or the realities of power. Indeed this is why interpreters of Arendt's formula miss what is most interesting, and most political, about her suggestion. For Arendt, politics is not about the use of power to pursue certain ends, nor is it defined by law and institutions, which for her are the result of politics or the framework in which it occurs. Politics, in contrast, refers to action directed towards public aims – interaction between people through which they establish and enact common purposes. Political activity – as indeed democratic action – is something people can only do together, in concert, and only when they recognize each other as free and equal. Thus the claim forwarded by Arendt: "We are not born equal, we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights. Our political life rests on the assumption that we can produce equality through organization insofar as it is guided by the principle of justice".²⁰ Rights in this sense derive less from the coercive power that enforces them or from laws and institutions; they have ultimately to do with people's willingness to guarantee them to one another, and to organize to establish or protect them. Although they have a moral basis, what counts is whether this morality is shared such that people treat one another as rights-bearing individuals. On this register, therefore, rights come to be interpreted not as protections against the state and one another but as preconditions for the on-going practice of democracy. Ingram thus rightly recommends: "Arendt's doubts about human rights are based neither on a fetishization of national citizenship nor on the lack of a power or law to *enforce* rights. Rather, they stem from what she regarded as limits to practices of mutual recognition".²¹

Doubts, of course, have been raised about the particularity of Arendt's vision of politics, and also whether it can be made to yield the more dynamic framing of the very question of human rights. In fact, the French theorist Jacques Rancière, in the contribution featured in the volume under review here, explicitly alludes to the 'inadequacies' of Arendt's frame. As he puts it:

It is only if you presuppose that the rights belong to definite or permanent subjects that you must state, as Arendt did, that the only real rights are the rights given to the citizens of a nation by their belonging to that nation, and guaranteed by the protection of their state. If you do this, of course, you must deny the reality of the struggles led outside of the frame of the national constitutional state and assume that the situation of the 'merely' human person deprived of national rights is the implementation of the abstractedness of those rights (p.178).

For Ranciere, human rights have two distinct meanings, and only become a politics when these meanings are played off against each other. In one sense, human rights "are written rights", the "inscriptions of the community as free and equal"; but, in another sense, they are also "the rights of those who make something of that inscription, who decide not only to 'use' their rights but also to build such and such a case for the verification of the power of the inscription" (p.174). Illustrating with the French case of women who campaigned for full citizenship during the French Revolution, Ranciere posits that this form of political activity doubly demonstrated that even as they were deprived of the rights that they had - apropos the revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man - they also, through their public action, could enact the rights that the constitution denied to them (p.176). Rights thus become *political* when they are denied and this denial is contested (that is to say, put to work to be realized), so that, for Ranciere, the politics of human rights consists precisely in the activity of claiming them. Accordingly, his paradoxical formula of human rights politics: "the Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not" (p.174).

Human rights on this register become an exemplary site of the process by which, as Ingram has pointed out, "political institutions or communities are forced to become more inclusive or egalitarian by challenges from the outside".²² Clearly, this framing of the politics of human rights - as arising from, and based upon, the political action of their bearers - is a more demanding conception. It avoids the unmediated moralism of much thinking on human rights - an avoidance which, it must be admitted, is also a defining impulse of the *Wronging Rights* volume - even as it naturalizes the space of rights to rights-bearers and their claims-making within and against the spaces of power. Doubtless, a danger posed by philosophical, moral and legal approaches to human rights is that they can weaken rights politically - in that they can encourage us to leave rights creation and protection to the state, the

courts, the United Nations, humanitarian organizations etc. with their attendant paradoxes. Alternatively, the basis of a democratic conception can obtain only when rights are based on shared understandings and practices and, even more emphatically, on people's readiness to act for and with one another (as indeed their ability to do so).

A question of rights and normativity

Interestingly, the basis of what we are calling the naturalistic approach to rights – and which, as we have argued above, translates into the claim that rights are constitutive of politics – refers us back to the systems of belief and value that provide normative justification for particular rights. Even so – and this is important – the objection can (and will) be made that this only takes the beliefs and values that sustain particular human rights into account in an historical and descriptive manner.²³ It does not tell us why certain ways of treating others, or certain ways of being treated, should be considered matters of right rather than mere matters of fact. This is a problem particularly for naturalistic accounts of rights since a distinctive and important feature of rights claims (as also the very process of claiming rights) is that they function normatively as moral considerations. Thus to say that someone has a right to something is to say that they have a particular kind of entitlement such that others are under an obligation to provide or at least not to prevent their obtaining it. Yet there appears to be nothing in the naturalistic conception of rights that accounts for this normative force of the appeal to rights.

We therefore need to find a way to navigate the equally unappealing alternatives of an ahistorical foundationalism and a historical contextualism that deprives rights of their normative force.²⁴ Indeed, it is at this point that theorists who somewhat absolutize the connection between a philosophical approach to rights and a political one (briefly alluded to at the start of our review) lay claim to our attention. In contrast to attempts to ground rights in a particular feature of individual human beings, these theorists take the view that whether or not an entity (individual or collective, personal or corporate) possesses rights will depend on facts about how that entity is able to act and how it is treated in a given social milieu.²⁵ The latter set of theorists offer interesting formulations about precisely which 'facts' about the social milieu are relevant for the existence of rights. Thus the philosopher Derrick Darby suggests 'institutional respect' for the behaviours in question is required for them to be considered rights, while also claiming that rights are socially recognized ways of acting or being acted upon that are justified in terms of some substantive moral theory or other; whereas Rex Martin

offers a looser characterization in describing rights as "established ways of acting or established ways of being acted toward, ways of being treated" but goes on to maintain that it is not only necessary that there be some form of moral justification for the right in question, the justification must also be accessible to agents on the basis of their actual moral and other beliefs.²⁶ To be sure, the positing of an extra condition in order to account for the normative dimension of rights – namely, that in order for an established way of acting or being acted upon to constitute a right it also must be justified in moral terms – implies, as Paul Patton has suggested elsewhere, that there is a real and distinct moral regime to rights and a genuine historical dimension to their existence.²⁷

Accordingly, appeals to human rights or to particular forms of right have to be understood in the manner of Martin's condition for the normative force of rights, that is, as appealing to historically available discourses of right. In this context, a very recent historical examination of the concept and practice of human rights lays claim to our attention. The historian Samuel Moyn has asserted that there is a "clear and fundamental difference" between earlier rights (in particular the 'Rights of Man' that powered early modern revolution and nineteenth century politics, "all predicated on belonging to a political community") and eventual human rights "coined in the 1940s that has grown so appealing in the last few decades".²⁸ According to him, the former were articulated around a politics of constructing citizenship within a defined space, whereas the latter promote a policy of compassion oriented toward an outside: "The one implied a politics of citizenship at home, the other a politics of suffering abroad". The rights of man were inseparably linked to building the state and the nation, whereas human rights aim to transcend the statist form. What today appears obvious to us – that the principal objective of human rights is to impose limits on state activities – would (according to Moyn) be an idea foreign to the 'Rights of Man', which aimed to define citizenship and not to protect humanity. He maintains that the alliance between the rights of man and the nation-state is not an unfortunate contingency but rather quintessential: "The alliance with state and nation was not some accident that tragically befell the rights of man: it was their very essence, for the vast bulk of their history". As part of this revisionism, besides, Moyn also stresses that, far from retrospectively celebrating the '1948' moment, the theme of human rights occupied only a marginal place in the post-war period – as he frames it, "the Universal Declaration and associated developments like the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) were minor byproducts of this era, not main features" – and that it was only at the end of the 1970s that it subsequently became a new *lingua franca* at the global level.

As should be evident, Moyn's rejection of retrospective history is sharp and astute, and translates into the suggestion that instead of celebrating human rights by inventing ancestral filiations, it is better to recognize its specific historical contingency as much likely to be swept away by other emergent utopias. But quite apart from the historian's challenge of constituting the actual moment of crystallization of an idea or practice, there is also the question - not quite only historical and/or methodological, I must reiterate - of a ground that provides a normative framework within which to describe and evaluate movements or processes. In other words, to analyse and/or historicize an idea or practice is to unravel the variable lines and singular processes that constitute it as a multiplicity: their connections and disjunctions and, above all, their possible transformations. Doubtless, along the lines of Moyn's revisionist history, there is no universal Reason or transcendental Subject, which could function as the bearer of universal human rights, but only variable and historically diverse processes of rationalization and 'subjectivation' (to use Foucault's term). Likewise, Moyn may well have a point in positing a demarcation between the historically prior 'rights of man' and the subsequent (or eventual) 'human rights'. But to argue that these two modes constitute distinct meanings and practices - the former aimed at the construction of citizenship within a given state and the latter marking a concern for humanity beyond national borders - is to ignore elements of the immanent process underwriting these two seemingly different claims. Indeed, even as human rights norms since the late 1970s have had as their focus and preoccupation the goal of imposing an international norm on state and actions, it has also contributed to defining various social struggles within national states in terms of expanding the space of citizenship. From the viewpoint of immanence, therefore, it is the process itself of assembling and contesting rights that must account for both the production of the norm as well as its possible alteration. In other words, the normativity of rights consists not only in providing norms for challenging abuses of power, but also a means for condemning norms that have themselves become abuses of power (e.g. the norms that govern the treatment of minorities, dalits, women, etc.).²⁹

There are, however, a number of reasons to believe that this does not still adequate to the normativity of rights - indeed the question why certain ways of treating others, or certain ways of being treated, should be considered matters of right rather than mere matters of fact. First, it is not clear that Martin's condition for the normative force of rights, that is, as appealing to historically available discourses of right, can do justice to the notion of right itself. If rights can be reduced to the existence of certain moral justificatory reasons that are historically available, then

why use the language of rights at all? Of course, one could respond pragmatically, suggesting that the concept of right is useful because it condenses a complicated arrangement of duties and commands into a simple statement of right. But this is hardly convincing. In fact, it may be pointed out that this pragmatic argument is itself dependent on a more active theory of right, which accounts for the already existing moral force of the notion of right to its connection with individual liberty.

To be sure, this conception of rights as bound up with individual liberty is not accidental within liberalism, being itself a product of the emergence of a certain view of the Subject as an autonomous, self-directing agent asserting his freedom as the rightful basis of social and political institutions.³⁰ Rights, on this liberal conception, articulate an idea of political legitimacy in which political institutions must derive their authority in some way from the will of those they govern. Liberals are therefore sensitized to the fact that *someone* must have the power to exercise rights and to coerce those bound to respect those rights. The virtue of such a conception of rights from the liberal standpoint is that it seeks to identify the will or power behind any exercise of right and to connect the legitimate ability to exercise power in the name of rights back to the rights-bearer. The exercise of rights, on this register, is always political, and not quite only because it entails the limitation of others' freedom. On this account, therefore, the question of who is exercising the right cannot be side-stepped and needs to be factored into our (or any) account of the normative force of rights.³ More pointedly, there are two things to be emphasized here. One, the agency who is authorized to claim or exercise a right is the rights-bearer himself/herself. Indeed, precisely because power and agency are not separated, a third party need not be introduced into the relationship; and, as we saw in the previous section with reference to Arendt's formula of the right to have rights, accordingly, transform rights-bearers into the claimants and enforcers of their rights. In other words, it was in the act of claiming the right that it really existed as the rights-bearer's right in the first place. Secondly, on this conception, it is a relevant part of the normative force of rights not just that the individual right be protected or enforced but that it be respected that in a way that maintains a certain kind of relationship between the rights-bearer and the enforcer. This is a question of political legitimacy (or consent) and therefore implies a kind of institutionalized relationship between the rights-bearer and the duty-bound agent or institution. In at least this limited sense, the moral force of rights can be seen to derive from an understanding of not just who the real rights-bearer is but also who the duty-bound enforcer is: it is not just someone able to protect an interest (or set of interests) but someone able

to do so in a way that maintains a specific kind of relationship between the rights-bearer and the agent of power.

Coda

A final personal note is perhaps in order. In giving the theme of this review – which, incidentally, is also the theme of the book subjected to review here – the extended treatment that I have, allow me a note of justification. There are several reasons why readers of this journal should be interested in recent work on the philosophy and history of human rights. The idea of ‘human rights’, arguably, provides the only plausible philosophical justification for the normative existence of universal values of dignity and human personhood (or agency). Further, if we allow human rights practice to include a moral philosophy that officially eschews the concepts of nature and providence, then we can say that human rights’ thinking provides a concept of moral cosmopolitanism that is central to current discussions of ethnocultural diversity, globalization and international law. Above all though, there can (or ought) surely be interest in a modality of thinking and practice which arises from the intersection of history, politics, philosophy and jurisprudence, and whose central object is to delineate the legitimacy and scope of understanding and ‘doing’ law and politics within and beyond national states. In a rapidly transforming world constituted as much by normative fragmentation as by constituent excess, it is imperative that we place ourselves in circumstances and conditions that enable us to modify the forms of knowledge as well as the subjects that produce it. Indeed, to deconstruct human rights means, in this case, to reconstruct the forms of knowledge proper to it. The review article has been an effort in this direction, while certainly not translating into a definitive statement on the question.

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Notes

- 1 All paginations in the text, unless otherwise specified, are from the volume under review. Since the collection put together is a fairly involved and reflective one, I will in the first two parts of the review be concerned to both render and characterize the essays themselves so as to give the reader a flavor of the challenges for human rights that emanate from the volume as a whole.
- 2 These (and such other) objections to the doctrine and practice of human rights

have been schematically formulated in Michael Freeman, 'Human Rights and the Corruption of Governments, 1789-1989' in Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova (ed.), *The Enlightenment and its Shadows* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.163-83. Freeman, of course, is interested to mediate defence of human rights, and offers a rebuttal of these objections. But the rebuttal treads a ground that the editors of the volume we are reviewing her would consider 'moralistic'.

- 3 Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp.83-86. All subsequent citations of Ignatieff are from this source and section. For Ronald Dworkin, see his *Life's Dominion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), especially Ch.3. Note, for Dworkin, sacredness does not necessarily require belief in God as the ground and giver of the sacred. For him the widespread intuition, however inarticulate, that human life, at least in its full sentient form, ought to be inviolable makes it worthy of those moral, legal and political protections that we denominate by the term 'human rights'. We intuit that such life is intrinsically - and not only instrumentally - valuable. For Dworkin, sacredness is free-floating: an artefact of our percept that there is something extraordinarily special about human life but incapable of resting on foundation that secures it, at least in a philosophical sense, against the vagaries of culture-dependent ascription. For a critique of this, see Michael Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights: Four Inquiries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Ch.1.
- 4 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, n.d.), p.43 and p.110.
- 5 Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), p.41. The earlier citations from Scruton are also from the same page.
- 6 I have in mind his remarkably erudite and lucid book *Rights* (Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press, 2008). See also his earlier work *Postcolonial Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 7 Indeed, with reference to my latter point, I have in mind the thought provoking comments on Marx's *On the Jewish Question* by Jay Bernstein. See his 'Right, Revolution and Community: Marx's 'On the Jewish Question'' in Peter Osborne (ed.), *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 91-119.
- 8 Duncan Ivison, 'Consent or Contestation' in Jeremy Webber and Colin Macleod (ed.), *Between Consenting Peoples: Political Community and the Meaning of Consent* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), pp.196-97. Incidentally, the most important discussion of interest-based rights is provided by Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.166 ff. To say 'A has a right to X' means that some interest of A is important enough to hold an order or authority under some kind of obligation to provide A with X, if it furthers that interest. But precisely because rights ultimately rest on moral beliefs and claims of this kind they are subject to disagreement. Indeed, the extension of the abstract concept is subject to change over time and space according to historical and contextual circumstances. This perhaps must await the treatment offered in the next two sections of this review article.
- 9 I shall be returning to this imagery of the politics of human rights in the next section of this review, and therefore will desist from further commentary.

- 10 Incidentally, this essay finds sharp commentary from Upendra Baxi in the latter's *The Future of Human Rights* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), although Baxi's polemic also misses out on the point of Rorty's essay.
- 11 See Wendy Brown, 'Suffering Rights as Paradoxes', *Constellations*, Vol.7 (2) 2000: 230-41. Thus with reference to the designation 'women's rights', for instance, Brown explicitly avers that while it "may entail some protection from the most immobilizing features of that designation" it "reinscribes the designation as it protects us, and thus enables our further regulation through that designation" (ibid., p.232).
- 12 This argument is essentially a variant of the one found in the French political theorist Claude Lefort. See the essay 'Politics and Human Rights' in his *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp.239-72. Lefort takes as his point of departure the thought that "rights are constitutive of politics", and one need only add that politics is here formulated and experienced as a paradox, in the strictest sense: the experience of "the legitimacy of a debate on the legitimate and the illegitimate, a debate necessarily without any guarantor and without any end" (ibid.: 243-44). Rights, precisely because they are based on nothing more or less than discourse (that is, on the claims we make to them), are essentially unlimited (which is to say, inessential and irreducible). Hence the "unpredictable adventure" of the right to rights, as Lefort argues: "The idea of human nature, which was so vigorously proclaimed at the end of the eighteenth century, could never capture the meaning of the undertaking inaugurated by the great American and French declarations. By reducing the source of right to the human utterance of right, they made an enigma of both humanity and right" (Claude Lefort, 'Human Rights and the Welfare State' in his *Democracy and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity press, 1988), p.37.
- 13 Let there be some misunderstandings on this score, let me quote the terms of this approach (as Ivison renders it) at some length: "If central to our conception of who we are includes the ways in which we are all vulnerable to various bodily afflictions and to changing fortunes across our life cycle (albeit in different ways), this will in turn shape our beliefs about what we owe to each other. But what we are is also, crucially, a function of the way we are shaped and moulded by cultural and social factors, and particularly various social and historical norms (which in turn shape the meaning of the 'fact' of our embodiedness). More to the point, if it is an ethological fact that human beings live under culture, then any proper understanding of human behaviour will require making sense of the complex ideas human beings have about their culture(s). An interactive naturalistic approach to normative questions in moral and political philosophy must account for these features" (Duncan Ivison, 'Consent or Contestation?', op. cit., p.198). See also his *Rights*, op. cit., esp. Introduction and Ch.1.
- 14 Duncan Ivison, 'Consent or Contestation?', op. cit., p.199. Clearly, the naturalistic approach to rights in perspective here is not speaking of a naturalism whose order of explanation is continuous with empirical enquiry in the sciences; rather, it is a naturalism that is continuous with "the kind of creatures we are, subject not only to physical and biological laws but also as social and cultural agents" (Ivison, *Rights*, op. cit., p.22). The onus of this approach, accordingly, is to avoid both moralism and reductionism about

- moral and political phenomena, an emphasis incidentally shared by the *Wrongs of Rights?* volume under consideration here.
- 15 Incidentally, it must be stated that of all the contributions marking the space of *Wrongs of Rights?*, it is only Ranciere's which explicitly engages aspects of Arendt's posing of the problem of human rights (albeit subjecting the latter to a critical disputation). I am also inclined to think that in our present conjuncture Arendt's reading of the discourse of human rights has a certain classical status to it, in the sense of sounding the limits of any *philosophical* challenge for human rights. The problem of reconciling a critique of the idea of basic human rights while at the same time locating a typical politics of human rights at the core of politics in general, especially democratic politics, is both reinforced and aggravated by Arendt. See also Etienne Balibar, '(De)constructing the Human as Human Institution: A Reflection on the Coherence of Hannah Arendt's Practical Philosophy', *Social Research*, Vol.74 (3) 2007: 727-38. My rendering of this space of problematisation of the question of human rights, however, owes much more to a penetrating contribution by the political scientist/theorist James D. Ingram, 'What is a "Right to Have Rights"? Three Images of the Politics of Human Rights', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.102 (4) 2008: 401-16. I know of no other piece that offers a *theoretical* diagnosis of the difficulties and reversals that afflict human rights advocacy today. Indeed, the difference of viewpoint (or approach) alluded to in the opening paragraph of our review has also been drawn from this source, although our uses of philosophical / political distinction diverge.
 - 16 See Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.55-8. For Frank Michelman's reading, see his 'Parsing "A Right to Have Rights"', *Constellations*, Vol.3 (2) 1996: 200-09.
 - 17 James D. Ingram, 'What is a "Right to Have Rights"?', op. cit. p.403. The references that follow in this paragraph are from Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, New Expanded Edition). The quotations, in the order represented, are from pp.279, 293, 297 and 299.
 - 18 James D. Ingram, 'What is a "Right to Have Rights"?', op. cit. p.403. He calls attention specifically to Michael Walzer, for whom the 'right to have rights' is first of all "the right to have an effective state", that is, "a state that enforces rights", although that is qualified by the observation that "some states protect some rights some of the time and no other political agency does that much" (see Michael Walzer, 'Human Rights in Global Society: How Much Enforcement Should International Society Assume?', *Internationale Politik Transatlantic Edition*, Vol. 6 (1) 2005: 4-13). On this register, the fact that states, even as they are required to protect rights, all too often can deny them necessitates 'human' rights. The political difficulty of these human rights is therefore enforcing them – against the relevant states if necessary; and here Walzer lays out the usual repertoire of options, from moral pressure to economic sanctions to criminal prosecution to, ultimately, military intervention. The last option is, of course, subject to massive disagreements, although the ground of international law in recent times has overseen interesting and controversial translations on this score. The claim

- underscoring Michael Ignatieff – namely, that “Human rights is nothing other than a politics, one that must reconcile moral ends to concrete situations and must be prepared to make painful compromises not only between means and ends, but between ends themselves” (*Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, op. cit., pp.21-2) – is of a piece with this conception of the politics of human rights.
- 19 James D. Ingram, ‘What is a “Right to Have Rights”?’, op. cit., p.404. The quotes that follow in the rest of this paragraph are from the same source, and obtain on pp.404-05. Precisely on these grounds, Ingram implores that the impulse behind this politics of human rights is essentially philanthropic; and it is precisely as an attempt to mediate the practical and conceptual difficulties of this conception that he goes on to consider an alternative conception of the politics of human rights, one conceiving human rights from within an institutional frame. The inspiration here is clearly Kantian, with the notion of ‘right’ referring less to a subjective right attaching to individuals nor to the moral property of ‘rightness’ in general, but ‘right’ as designating a socio-political condition of just law and institutions. Such a standpoint underscores the approach of normative political philosophy, and has the deficiency, insofar as thinking about the politics of human rights is concerned, that Ingram points to: namely, that “instead of solving the problem of the relation between morality and power, it displaces it, transforming it into the problem of achieving just institutions” (Ingram, ‘What is a “Right to Have Rights”?’, *ibid.*, p.405).
- 20 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, op. cit., p.301. Clearly, for Arendt, the problem of community, that is, establishing and maintaining political relations, is *prior* to the question of justice, which is for her a subsequent issue to be debated and realized after political relations are established and maintained. It is not surprising therefore that, for Arendt, the most important deprivation wrought upon the stateless was “not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion” (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *ibid.*, p.296). As already acknowledged, my thinking along this axis has been guided above all by James D. Ingram’s ‘What is a “Right to Have Rights”?’, op. cit., although the innovative readings in Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz and Thomas Keenan (ed.), *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010) have opened my eyes to the urgency of her commitments.
- 21 James D. Ingram, ‘What is a “Right to Have Rights”?’, op. cit. p.410. Note, Ingram does concede that Arendt’s focus on community and solidarity could preclude any thinking of human rights, which are by definition universal. Nevertheless, he recommends the active, cooperative nature of rights in Arendt’s thinking, as she conceives of rights not in terms of a status (say, holding a passport) but as an activity which encodes within it the possibility that a community can be created that can struggle for rights. Ingram, in fact, forwards the interpretation of the ‘right to have rights’ offered by Etienne Balibar, according to whom the Arendt formula translates as “a universal right to politics: a right of everyone on his or her own behalf” and which signifies “among other things, that no one can be liberated or emancipated by others, from ‘above’, even were this above to be right itself, or the democratic state” [Balibar, ‘What is a Politics of the Rights of Man?’ in his *Masses, Classes, Ideas*

(London: Routledge, 1994), pp.212-13]. On this trajectory, Ingram suggests that the politics of human rights would be the activity of those who join together, regardless of national and legal identities, to secure one another's rights. See also the argument that follows in our text.

- 22 James D. Ingram, 'What is a "Right to Have Rights"?', op. cit. p.412. While conceding that Ranciere often develops his notion of politics through a disputation of Arendt, Ingram observes that the former can be better grasped as an emendation and extension of the latter's framework. With Ranciere, Ingram reads Arendt as conceiving of rights "not as a status but as an activity" and, as such, to be approached as a "thinker of the *creation* of rights" (ibid.). The Arendtian formula of the "right to have rights", accordingly, has to be understood as "activated only when human rights are put into practice in an effort to expand the conditions for participation in political life" (Ingram, ibid.).
- 23 Thus the claim forwarded by Wendy Brown in her essay featured in the *Wronging Rights* collection: "Human rights activism is a moral-political project and if it displaces, competes with, refuses, or rejects other political projects, including those also aimed at producing justice, then it is not merely a tactic but a particular form of political power carrying out a particular image of justice, and it will behoove us to inspect, evaluate, and judge it as such" (p.134). Clearly, what Brown is getting at here is a certain hegemonic status of human rights within progressive politics, which translates into more defensive options vis-à-vis the status quo rather than direct struggles seeking transcendence from a given order of things. Likewise, the warning sounded by Spivak in her contribution as a whole: that by seeing human rights as absolute moral imperatives, we may be tempted to impose them without the participation or even the consent of those they are meant to benefit. The danger is not simply that heteronomous understandings of human rights politics may lure us into paternalism or even imperialism; it is that they can undermine the cause of human rights even among those whom these rights are intended to benefit. See also David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 24 I am inclined to think that Ingram's account, founded as it is on a binary instituted by the political approach to human rights (as opposed to a philosophical approach), is unable to negotiate the space of this question. Likewise, the contributions featured in, and the editorial arrangement structured by, the *Wronging Rights?* volume. My thinking along this axis bears the imprint of Paul Patton, whose *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000) straddles an interface between the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the 'liberal' tradition of political philosophy. Patton works off the idea that, for Deleuze, a truly 'normative' principle must be a principle of creation as well as critique: it must not only provide norms for condemning abuses of power, but also a means for transforming norms that have themselves become abuses of power. My thinking on these questions remains fuzzy yet, but this review article working off the idea of human rights is an effort to sort out some of this ground.
- 25 The predominant approach to the nature of rights in contemporary moral and political philosophy supposes that these inhere in individuals by virtue of some universal 'rights bearing' feature of human nature, such as sentience,

rationality, interests or the capacity to form and pursue projects. In this manner, for example, Alan Gewirth argues along Kantian lines that the capacity to form and pursue projects ensures that all humans have a right to freedom and well-being since they are necessary conditions of such agency. See his 'The Epistemology of Human Rights' in E. Paul, F. Miller and J. Paul (ed.), *Human Rights* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984). The readings compiled in Jeremy Waldron (ed.), *Theories of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) also reproduce the terms of this conceptualization in good measure. For the theorists opposed to conceptualizing rights in this manner, see R. Martin, *A System of Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); also, Derrick Darby, 'Unnatural Rights', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.33 (1) 2001: 49-82.

- 26 The lines cited from Martin are from his *A System of Rights*, op. cit., p.41; see also p.78, where Martin interprets the normatively binding character of rights to mean that people can only be supposed to have obligations of which they are or could in practice be reflectively aware. For Darby, see his 'Unnatural Rights', op. cit., esp. p.68. Darby admits that his claim about rights calls for further specification of what might constitute an adequate moral theory, but presents it as a virtue of his account that leaves open the question what kind of moral theory might provide an acceptable justification. To be sure, this leaves out something important from a historical point of view. The supposition underwriting Darby is that the moral force of rights derives only from their being supported by some form of moral argument, independently of historical questions about the availability of such argument to actually existing agents.
- 27 See Paul Patton, 'Foucault, Critique and Rights', *Critical Horizons*, Vol.6 (1) 2005: 267-87. In fact, it must be acknowledged that the framing of the contents of this section of my review article owes much to this particular reading. Patton is here seeking to reconcile aspects of Foucault's genealogical critique (which would render inconsistent any appeal to rights) with the latter's frequent use of the concept of right in his political interviews. Even as Patton sets about answering the question - "How can such appeals avoid the charge that they contradict the explicit particularity of critique as he [Foucault] describes it?" (ibid., p. 270) - he goes on to reiterate that we must understand the normative force of rights claims as derived from historically available discourses of right.
- 28 Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), p.12. The quotes that follow in this paragraph are from the same source and can be traced to pp.12, 30 and 46 respectively. For Moyn, the nineteenth century movement advocating the rights of man was part of the "liberal nationalism" that aimed to protect the rights of citizens within a national framework. Similarly, he doubts that the social struggles of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th actually contributed to the extension of the language of rights. On the one hand, the demand for social rights aimed to redefine citizenship, not to transcend the state. On the other hand, the call for rights long remained associated - notably between the world wars - with the defence of contractual freedom and property law. Chapter 1 of Moyn reproduces this history in a fairly lucid manner.
- 29 Indeed, I am here reminded of what Paul Patton has argued in forwarding Deleuze's conception of power as explicitly normative: "What a given assemblage is capable of doing or becoming is determined by the lines of flight or deterritorialization which it can sustain" (Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*,

op. cit., p.106). My attentiveness to the space of these questions has been augmented by the review essay by Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze and the Liberal Tradition: Normativity, Freedom and Judgement', *Economy and Society*, Vol.32 (2) 2003: 299-324. In fact, the quote from Deleuze placed epigrammatically at the beginning of our review – namely, "The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are one and the same" – is from Daniel Smith's review essay. The quote features on p.308 of the latter.

- 30 I am here following Jeremy Waldron's argument. See his 'Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism' in his (ed.), *Liberal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 31 In fact, the problem is enhanced on the global stage by the institutional ambiguities, where even as the beneficiary appears to be the rights-bearer, the real agent is the interpreter of the duty. Thus, in the human rights field particularly, one is witness to a whole host of mediating institutions (NGOs, international organizations and donor agencies, coalitions of the willing, etc.) who claim to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves and to protect the rights of those who cannot protect themselves. The consequence here is that human rights do little to 'empower' the rights-holder but give a lot of power to the mediating actor.

R.S. Sharma – A Tribute

Professor R.S.Sharma was born in the year in which my father was born. Going beyond this accidental relation, he has been like a father to me. This is not just hype, to be used on occasions like this. I have benefited immensely from my association with him. From a very casual meeting to a very intimate relationship, our bonds grew and I have always cherished the affection and patronage I have received from him.

I saw him casually in the library of the University of Delhi in 1974 on an October morning, when I, as a student in Jawaharlal Nehru University, had gone there looking for K.P.Padmanabha Menon's *History of Kerala*, of which there was no copy in the JNU library. I saw a relatively elderly gentleman at the entrance, clad in *dhoti* and *kurta*. Taking him for an employee of the library, I asked him, in my broken Hindi, where I could find books on history. Instead of telling me, he took me to the racks, asking me on the way where I was from and which book I wanted. He took me to the shelf and showed me the book I was looking for. I sat in the reading room taking down notes from the book. After a few hours, as I was leaving, I saw this gentleman still sitting there, reading a large book. I did not bother to know who this gentleman was – for, I had known Mr. Bhagavat of the Archaeological Survey of India earlier. I thanked him as I was leaving; but he asked me, with a wink, “why should you thank me? I am just a reader here like you.”

About two months later, during the Jadavpur session of the Indian History Congress, I told my teacher, Professor Romila Thapar, that I would like to meet Professor R.S.Sharma if he was there. She called out “R.S.”, and whom do I see? When Professor Thapar introduced me to him as her student, he said, “Yes, I know him; he was there in our library the other day reading Padmanabha Menon”. Then he asked me more about my work and told me how important regional history is. I met him again

next year at the Aligarh session of the Congress, where he was the General President. I had presented a paper on "*Cattas and Bhattas*" in the Ancient Indian History section, which he listened to carefully. I had questioned a statement of Professor Sharma in the paper, in a language that was not exactly polite. As I was sitting down, he came to me and took a copy of the paper from me. After about two weeks, I got a two-page letter, accepting my criticism but explaining his position. The boost that the letter gave my morale was more than anything I had got. Ever since, he closely followed what I was doing and would tell me and write to me about what he read. He would discuss books he had read and ask me what I was working on every time we met. I have to mention here also that as an examiner of my Ph.D. thesis, the suggestions he gave me have helped me immensely when I revised it for publication. I have learned from a number of friends and colleagues that this has been their experience too. I have certainly had the privilege of having a paternal figure in Professor Sharma.

I am not very confident about my abilities to make an assessment of the contributions of Professor Sharma to Indian historiography. Even as a student of the Masters programme in the University of Calicut, we were introduced to the writings of R.S.Sharma. Rarely had we known at that time that we were using the books that had brought about a veritable revolution in Indian historiography. Gradually, as we started going through these books, we were able to see the difference. We were so far used to dynastic histories, with the "career and achievements" of "great" rulers; the excesses of bad rulers; administration and social life under individual dynasties; cultural contributions of this dynasty or that and the alternation of golden ages and dark ages. But the books by Sharma did not say anything of that sort. *Sudras in Ancient India*, for instance, called itself a "social history of the lower order". Here we were told about how a tribal society disintegrated and, in the process, a differentiated society where the differences were expressed in terms of *varna* came into being. My god! Was the Vedic society a tribal society? This sounded like sacrilege; but we read on. The *•dra varna*, we read in the book, was increasingly suffering disabilities in the age of the Guptas, when agrarian relations got transformed. Yes, this was different from the kind of understanding that we had about the age of the Guptas, the "Golden Age" of Indian history that we had been familiar with.

Another book we were introduced to then was his *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*. Familiar so far with the scheme of empires and invasions, dark ages and golden ages, appearing in turns in the political processes and structures in ancient India, we saw in this book a pattern that was entirely different. Here was a systematic presen-

tation of the process by which a tribal polity broke up and a territorial state rose on its ruins. This state got refined further and graduated into an empire. The empire succumbed to centrifugal forces and feudal tendencies overtook the polities in the post-imperial phase. The institutions that emerged all through and the ideas which they threw up were all discussed with a view to showing how the one was dependent on the other. This demonstrated to us the compatibility of the one with the other. His treatment of the *ratnahavamsi* ceremony in the Vedic texts will suffice to demonstrate this. What is a "bureaucracy" doing in a society which was still tribal, where the institution of the state was irrelevant? This was all so very different from what we had read in our Jayaswals and Altekar, our Drekemeirs and Heestermans. Yes, we were attracted to this kind of historiography, where the perspective, to our mind, was scientific.

It was a little later that we had occasion to lay our hands on *Indian Feudalism*. We were familiar with the feudal jargon used in the context of Indian history even in earlier books. Thus, H.C. Raychaudhuri had talked about barons and vassals in the age of the *mahajanapadas* and Nilakanta Sastri and Mahalingam had written about "feudatories" all over south India. But this jargon, we thought, had no rigour: in a situation which is not clearly demonstrated as feudal, feudatories and vassals and barons sounded like an incongruity, at least to some of us. Sharma's book was different. It saw feudalism as a definite stage in the process of the development of Indian society. Here is a book which kindled one of the most meaningful debates in Indian historiography, which produced considerable light and some avoidable heat. It is not surprising that even before the lectures that Sharma had given in the University of Calcutta were available in their printed version, a rejoinder to them by D.C. Sircar, *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, was published by that University. Such was the panic among the orthodox when a systematic exposition of the feudal tendencies unleashed by the land grants was made. Sharma demonstrated that when agrestic labourers got tied down to the land they worked, when a hierarchy of intermediaries were placed between the producer on the one side and the state on the other, when the fiscal, administrative and judicial powers were parcelled out along with land granted to religious and secular beneficiaries, a new formation came into being. It is this that he described as "feudal". It was not hollow jargon.

The debate that ensued was at two levels. While D.C. Sircar and company, firmly footed in the epigraphical material that Sharma used, were ill at ease with the Marxist ring in his theory, others, more theoretically refined but less strong in the empirical field, raised objec-

tion to the theoretical aspects of it. How can transformation in a mode of production be explained as following from an administrative action such as royal grants? Sharma effectively answered all and showed that land grants were more a symptom than the cause, and the real cause had to be looked for elsewhere. He saw expressions of a major social crisis in the descriptions of the Kali age in the Puranic literature. He noted the decline of trade and urban centres in the Ganga valley initially in a paper and developed it into a whole book. I do not intend to go further. Even those who do not go all the way with Sharma on his thesis on Indian feudalism will not be able to doubt the level to which this debate raised Indian historiography.

Sharma's strength was his thorough mastery of the sources – epigraphical, literary and archaeological. This empirical command was matched by the theoretical refinement that he brought to bear on his writing. And, the result is history that makes sense. It is this that we are going to miss, and we will not stop missing him for a long time to come.

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Book Reviews

Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals, Niall Ferguson (Ed.), Penguin Books, 2011, pp.440, Rs. 499

Niall Ferguson is a British historian who specializes in financial and economic history, particularly hyperinflation and the bond markets, as well as increasingly the history of colonialism (Wikipedia). Ferguson has of late made a career out of writing creative counterfactual history also known as Virtual History. It is best understood as the "What If..." school of writing history.

Since Niall Ferguson has championed the cause of counterfactual history so doggedly through his career, and been the soul behind the production of this book, it is instructive to look into his background and current preoccupations. Ferguson, was born in Glasgow, UK and is presently the Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University as well as a senior research Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford and a senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He has published extensively – 8 books and many journalistic and research papers and has made 5 BBC Films. During the 2008 U.S. Presidential election Ferguson advised the Republican, Senator John McCain's campaign. (The Wikipedia entry for Niall Campbell Douglas Ferguson, gives a lot of information on Ferguson's professional and personal life.)

In the years since the book first came out in 1997 and it's publishing by Penguin this year, Ferguson has become somewhat of a celebrity historian. So far as I have been able to find out that this book has been previously reviewed only by Aviezer Tucker when it was first published. I have tried to find the review by Tucker but it is published in the journal *History & Theory* which was not accessible for the purpose of this review. Going by Tucker's publishing on the subject of historiography, however one can conclude that it was not a sympathetic review.

Coming back to *Virtual History*, the book under review. In a lengthy introduction, Niall Ferguson defines two ways Counterfactual or 'Virtual' History can be approached or written – "those which are essentially the products of imagination but (generally) lack an empirical basis; and those designed to test hypotheses by (supposedly) empirical means, which eschew imagination in favour of computation..." He goes on to add that "the book is in essence, a series of separate voyages into 'imaginary time'....The world is not divinely ordered, nor governed by Reason, the class struggle or any other deterministic law. All we can say for sure is that it is condemned to increasing disorder by entropy"

The range of subjects covered for counterfactual analysis through the book is interesting. Mostly the book deals with British History, staring

with 'England without Cromwell' and ending with 'Hitler's England'. There are pieces on Europe and Russia, "Kaiser's European Union", 'Nazi Europe', 'Stalin's War or Peace', '1989 without Gorbachov' and the US weighs in with the presidency of JFK evaluated in 'Camelot continued'. Ferguson then rounds up with a lengthy afterward called 'A Virtual History from 1644-1996'.

The essays in the book are all interesting, though as is to be expected from such a range, the quality of scholarship varies with the subject and the authors grasp of the main events and personalities as well as the actual outcome of that particular event in history. I do think that the authors or the editor could have introduced the actual historical event and key personalities in a short note before the essays to give the reader a context in which to understand the counterfactual narrative that plays out in the essays. Three essays are outstanding and merit a further discussion in the review.

John Adamson has done a masterly study of England without Cromwell. Being a Fellow at Cambridge and a published award winning author, Adamson has a good understanding of the subject. The subtext to the essay is a pertinent question "What if Charles 1 had avoided the Civil War?" Through contemporary sources and a reconstruction of an alternative scenario where Charles' army had actually waged a successful war against the Covenanters in 1639, Adamson puts forward the following counterfactual - "Military success would have offered Charles 1 the opportunity to realize his ambition to create an 'imperial' unity between the three kingdoms - in effect to make Scotland and Ireland yet further subservient to the English state. In government and law (as already in religion), England would have provided the models for the 'order and decency' to which the Celtic Kingdoms were to be made to conform. Victory would have given the King the opportunity to press on with the agenda of His Personal Rule upon which, as he saw it, his subjects welfare depended....". The Civil Wars under Charles 1 defined the monarchy's role and Britain's history as we know it now. It could well have turned out differently.

Niall Ferguson pitches in with an interesting essay on Kaiser Wilhelm and his theory of a united Europe in 'The Kaiser's European Union'. The subtext here is "what if Britain had 'stood aside' in August 1914". Ferguson argues persuasively that had Britain not intervened immediately in the aftermath of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, "Germany's war aims would have been significantly different". Thus his conclusion is that "A fresh assessment of Germany's pre war aims reveals that, had Britain stood aside - even for a matter of weeks - continental Europe would have been transformed into something not unlike the European Union we know today."

This is followed by the more fanciful belief that, had a European Union been achieved at the time, it would have prevented the "massive contraction in British overseas power entailed by the fighting of two world wars. Perhaps too the complete collapse of Russia into the horrors of Civil War and Bolshevism might have been averted... a properly constitutional monarchy or a parliamentary republic would have stood more chance of success after a shorter war...and there certainly would not have been that great incursion of American financial and military power into European affairs which effectively marked the end of British financial predominance in the world...." Thus the ultimate conclusion, "By fighting Germany in 1914, Asquith, Grey and their colleagues helped ensure that, when Germany did finally achieve predominance on the continent, Britain was no longer strong enough to provide a check to it".

"Camelot Continued.... What if JFK had lived" by Diane Kunz is provocative as the title suggests, and hence the freshest thought in the collection. Kunz is an attorney at the New York Bar and a historian (she taught history at Yale and Columbia Universities till 2001) and has authored 3 books on economic diplomacy and the Cold War. Kunz writes in the context of the Vietnam War and the subsequent myth making by the Kennedy family that had he lived JFK would have withdrawn from Vietnam, "In dying Kennedy handed Johnson a poisoned chalice....Yet, had he lived, Kennedy would have found himself drinking from exactly the same poisoned chalice. He was the one who made the two decisions which Americanized the war. In 1961 he had increased drastically the American men and materials flowing into South Vietnam, thereby turning an advisory relationship into a partnership. His determination two years later actively to encourage the overthrow of the (Ngo Dinh) Diem government had signified the depth of the American involvement and ensured its extension." Thus in answer to the central counterfactual question of this essay, "would Kennedy have won the 1964 presidential elections if he had lived to fight it?", Kunz answers, "The answer is probably yes – but only if he had maintained his commitment to Vietnam...Inevitably like Johnson he would have taken the middle road at every juncture....In short, it would have been All the Way with JFK too". It is rare for an American academic to be so bold and honest about a historical personality still beloved in America. This is why Kunz's essay is outstanding. One can't agree more with her when she concludes, "The former Communist world has lost its idols. It is now time for Americans to relinquish one of theirs."

It is interesting to see the strides made by scholarship in the understanding of the nature of the beast of 'History' and sometimes one gets the impression that historians approach their subject much like the

wise men who prospected an elephant, each coming away with a unique understanding of what they had encountered.

Going through a book on counterfactuals such as the book under review, one is always struck with awe by the sheer scale and unfolding of 'History' much like that of 'Nature'. There is so much that is unknown and concealed in layers, like petals opening up, to reveal a pre-existing grand design ready to be consumed by an avaricious human race, eager to understand its place in the larger scheme of things.

When you know what came before, you will know what lies ahead but that knowledge is acquired only if you ask the right questions.

Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals makes you want to ask questions about all those events and personalities that one encounters in historical narratives. It is not just an interesting and topical book but an important and imaginative perspective on writing and understanding history. It should be appreciated by a wider audience of the public and not just academia.

Niraja Rao, Journalist based in Mumbai

The Partition of India, Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. xvii+ 206, Rs. 695

Historiography on Partition has indeed evolved over the years, both in terms of themes explored and methodology used. Accordingly, the authors of the book under review have, individually and jointly, covered nearly all aspects of the most contentious theme in the history of the subcontinent – the Partition of the Indian subcontinent – in their previous works. This book is a further addition to the most recent trend in Partition historiography – that of looking beyond 1947. It is also an attempt to move away from a Punjab-centric understanding of Partition and its aftermath. The book also makes a very tentative first attempt at reading the continuing Indo-Pak conflict, especially the rift over Jammu and Kashmir, through the lens of Partition: 'Over sixty years on, the effects of 1947 continue to impact on both state and society. India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed states, remain in uneasy dialogue. And the 'unfinished business of partition', the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, still makes them 'distant neighbours'. (p.3). Finally, it also looks at the impact of partition in the internal politics of India and Pakistan, i.e. the authors argue that the development of the nature of the two states was very much influenced by partition.

The first chapter is an overview of Partition Historiography. The

authors trace the emergent changes in the historiography from the earliest works on partition which dealt with the issue of 'high politics' to the more recent works which focus on the 'human dimension'. However, there are some gaps and biases which cannot be overlooked. In the entire discussion on 'high-politics', the main focus is on the conflict between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. The role of the British is seen to be as more of a facilitator for a smooth transfer of power: 'We argue that Partition was not the 'parting gift' of an outgoing imperial rule: rather the Congress and Muslim League leaders, both nationally and regionally, were heavily implicated in the outcome, especially in Bengal and Punjab.' (p.8). Further, an effort is made to undermine any critique of Mountbatten: 'Despite the lively and intemperate debate about the final Viceroyalty, it needs to be remembered that emphasis on Mountbatten's personality obscures the extent to which he was carrying out policy, rather than making it. It also occludes the pressures from below with the rising tide of religious violence which limited his room for manoeuvre.' (p. 14).

Chapter two discusses how the country was partitioned. Here the authors discuss the making of the borders in the East and West and the annexation of the princely states. The larger argument, however, is to assign the blame of partition upon the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress leaders alone by maintaining that the role of the British was merely that of refereeing and ensuring that the 'transfer of power' was carried out in the smoothest possible manner: 'Although great controversy still surrounds Mountbatten's timing of partition and the boundary and security arrangements which accompanied it, there is little evidence for the claim that he imposed partition on reluctant and unsuspecting Indian leaders. Partition was not a 'parting gift' of outgoing imperial masters: it was self-consciously willed by the All India National Congress and Muslim League leaders, and above all, reflected their fears and mistrusts, as well as hopes, that a 'right-sized' state would deliver to them the power to construct a new political, economic and social order in a free subcontinent.' (p. 41). The authors also wish to drive home the point that it was largely due to the efforts of Mountbatten that the princely states acquiesced to join India: 'Mountbatten, in his role as Crown representative, followed up a persuasive speech in favour of accession to the Chamber of Princes on 25 July with lobbying of those who still wavered. General chaos was avoided.' (p. 55). According to the authors, this role of the Viceroy is totally ignored by the Indian scholars. The entire chapter, in fact, once again reiterates the dominant theme of the book which is to show the British as 'reluctant partitionists' in more ways than one.

Chapter three and four discuss in detail the immediate aftermath of partition: migration and rehabilitation of refugees. Chapter three discusses the aspect of partition violence, and rightly points out to the change in the nature of communal riots as well as its organized nature. A notable point made by the authors in Chapter three is that their analysis of partition violence is not restricted to events of 1947 alone. Instead, the riots which occurred in West Bengal and East Pakistan in 1950 are brought well under the ambit of partition violence. Also, using the example of Malerkotla, they are able to show that what was required was 'the existence of a functioning authority and a political will to deploy force' to ensure peace and 'stamp out disorder' (p.80). Finally, using the evidences from the riots studied, the authors are able to argue that partition violence was anything but 'spontaneous madness': '... they were operating in an environment in which such violence was *socially sanctioned*.' (p. 88).

Chapter four discusses the difficult journey to safety undertaken by the migrants and the State efforts in rehabilitating these refugees. The authors analyse varied pattern of migration in the east and west, and also the state-sponsored rehabilitation programmes in some detail. Interestingly, they look at the issue from the point of class concerns and regions. Whereas, they note a class bias in rehabilitation policies, i.e. the rich walk away with better homes, lands, etc, simultaneously, a region-wise study by the authors highlights the glaring differences between rehabilitation in Punjab and Bengal in India, and similarly also in West Punjab and Dacca in Pakistan.

It is Chapter five and Chapter six which focus on the long-term impact of partition on both the nascent nation states: India and Pakistan. Chapter five focuses on the issue of aftermath of partition from two perspectives: that of the state and that of the refugees. Whereas for the state, the immediate effect of partition was the tendency to create a centralized state structure and thereby preventing any secessionist activity, for the refugees it created the binaries of minority/majority and refugee/local. These aspects, according to the authors, laid down the foundations for the internal and external problems within the two states. These problems are discussed in the next chapter in much detail.

Thus, the final chapter deals with the unresolved Indo-Pakistan dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, the steps taken by both sides to move forward and also the risk in not doing so.

In all, the book attempts to stretch our understanding of partition beyond the dominant theme of high-politics, and also beyond a Punjab-centric view. At the same time it is a valuable contribution in the field of inter-city and inter-regional studies on partition. A student of partition

can benefit from the many pointers towards further research provided in this book.

Pallavi Chakravarty, Research Scholar, Delhi University. Delhi

Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming A Borderland: The Politics Of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011, HB, pp. 250, Rs. 695

Situated along the eastern and western fringes of the present Indian states of West Bengal and Assam respectively, the regional significance of Goalpara has changed in the context of varied structures of power within the chronological sequence of time. By becoming 'economically and culturally peripheral, initially to the colonial empire in eastern India and subsequently to the Indian nation and the post-colonial state' (p.1), this representation of Goalpara as a marginalized region with its culture and people talks of a continuity rather than a break, thus falling victim to different understandings of nationalism and belonging. Writing 'connected histories of borderland spaces, where the pre-colonial history of such places is studied in terms of an interface 'between the local and the regional...and the supra-regional, at times even global' (p. 1) is the running theme of this book. Sanghamitra Misra's work can, therefore, be seen as a break from the conventional works on peripheral histories as she looks at how the links between Goalpara and its adjacent areas changed as a result of an altercation of power structures that had maintained these links. This also led to a change in the orientation of dealings with the adjacent areas in terms of articles of trade, people and significance of places – a discontinuity occurring from a notion of equality and sharing to that of inequality and exclusivity of resources.

For Misra, the colonial and the Mughal state were similar yet different when it came to their association with the local communities. Hers is one of the few notable attempts at comparing the centralization tendencies engulfing the peripheries by both the Mughal and the colonial state, by a pre-modern, pre-capitalist state and a modern, capitalist state highlighting the similarities and differences in the creation of power structures between the two.

The 'borderland' is a colonial construct which indicates its marginalization. Her view points are very much like that of Sanjib Baruah, who brings to the foreground local spatial practices. She focuses on the heterogeneity of cultures and people and not its homogeneity which is precisely a colonial and later, a nationalist construct.

Even though boundaries are fixed and inflexible, it is the movement

of people along with their cultures that render these fixities illegitimate as they cannot exercise any control over the interactions among people. In fact, these limitations serve the political motives of the elite, having less or no significance for the commoner whatsoever.

Despite having cultural and historical memories with so many regions and groups, the cultural and political contestation of only two identities have been strong in the twentieth century – viz. that of the Bengali and the Assamese. Goalpara became a site for the contestation of power and regional political hierarchy for those campaigning for each of these identities. The usage of a local identity such as 'Goalparia' was to validate the rationale of each form of regional nationalism.

Misra, like Yasmin Saikia uses memory to trace the association between land and its people. Hers is an attempt at deconstructing the term 'borderland' / 'frontier' by throwing a fresh insight into the history of this land by tracing of memories of inhabitants, local rulers, Mughal and colonial officials in order to show how Goalpara came to be viewed differently by different people. The author attempts at undoing a history written from the 'core' (critiques the writings of historians who write from the perspective of the 'core' (such as Joya Chatterji and Richard Eaton) and tries to look and locate history from the perspective of someone living on the periphery, from the perspective of someone belonging to a region that has frequently received a marginal treatment in the historical works of many who write from the mainstream nationalist perspective. The book marks a break away from the grand narratives related to national histories and explores human relations and political associations beyond the fixed boundaries of nationhood, even as it undoes the inflexibility of viewing people and their history that comes attached with the nation.

Another positive aspect about the book is the richness of fresh sources in writing the history of the North-East such as sanads, travelogues from Mughal expeditions, early colonial travel and private manuscripts, apart from ethnographic writings and records from the archives.

While basing her arguments on the notion of shared ethnicity and territoriality, the author aims to subsume the differences between Bengali and Assamese by citing that these rifts were a result of the colonial construct of the borderland and its people as the colonists were constantly in the habit of categorizing people and places and thus, creating a hierarchy of race, class and gender – a trait left behind by the colonists in the post-colonial world as a result of interaction with the so called 'Other'. One should note that the colonists suffered from the post-enlightenment attitude of defining the 'true east' versus the 'true west' in its dealings with the colonized. Elements that enjoyed a considerable degree of importance in pre-colonial times, such notions of power were

now fixed and limited with the onslaught of colonialism. The advent of modernization subsumed the local elements within a colonial notion of modernization where power, progress and wealth had to be limited and selective for the 'natives'.

The book is significant especially due to its focus on the non-acceptance of the 'greater Assamese identity' prevalent among certain sections of the Assamese themselves which tended to subsume the distinctiveness of a particular region and its people such as in the case of Goalpara, thus, resisting colonialism of a different kind while at the same time allotting a position of respect and acknowledgement for what such distinctiveness represents, bringing the unequal to an equal footing and appealing for the right to free movement in a liberal democratic sense.

Although a sincere effort at undoing the 'historical peripheralization' of this region and its people and launching a critique against the 'civilizational approach' (p. 5 - in tune with David Ludden), the very act of making illegible the historical peripheralization of Goalpara meant indirectly falling into the pitfall of exalting the land and its people in the civilizational hierarchy itself. One cannot completely overlook or discard nationalist histories in shaping the identity of particular people and regions (even though they are 'marginalized') because this very 'marginalization' forms a background for scholars like Sanghamitra Misra to go beyond these national spaces and undo the peripheralization or marginalization of the land and people concerned.

What is also talked about is resistance to the incorporation into the process of state formation (also a marker of civilizational hierarchy) by marginalized groups but, however, one should not forget the emergence of Naga nationalism and a few other states of the north-east and group nationalisms as a result of the very act of resisting the state. For example, the Boros are demanding their own state separate from Assam, where their 'own people' can form a state and rule. Thus, it is difficult to say whether these groups completely cut themselves off from the temptations of the state and the privileges that come with it. Also it is not easy to say if the demands of many groups attempting to form their own realms of power and privilege would end at this or lead to further fragmentation of land and groups amongst themselves forming a kind of domino effect.

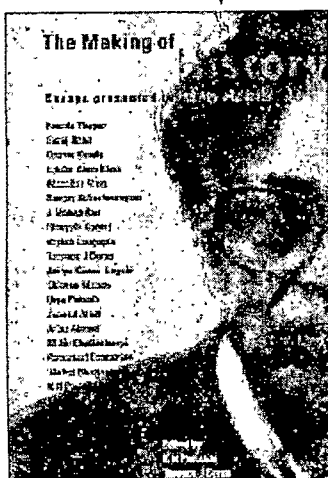
With the coming of the state - be it Mughal or colonial - an inegalitarian ethos seeps into the realm of human relationships which is resented in the forms of peasant rebellions. It indirectly shows that the locals were resisting a centralized state system that brought changes in their old modes of living and sustenance. But can we also say that it shows the inability of the locals or their power structures to adjust to new systems of administration and changes altogether?

The intense focus on the effects of the state – both Mughal and colonial – on the peripheral economy, culture and administration deviates one's attention away from the ways in which the Mughal and the colonial state adjusted to these peripheral cultures to be able to establish a hold over these regions. This becomes important to understand that the dominance of one mode of governance over another need not necessarily be always premised on friction, but can also be based on the willingness to make adjustments. This brings us to the author's emphasis on community interaction and harmony which, according to her, prevailed among the local cultures in the pre-colonial or even pre-Mughal times. This tends to conveniently overlook the schisms that might have existed within the local cultures themselves.

While talking about the way the history of Assam came to be written about, it is a little difficult to comprehend what exactly is being conveyed. On one hand, the author draws our attention to the historians' assertion of 'strong claims to an Aryan past' (p. 167) while on the other hand, she quotes those like Hem Chandra Goswami, according to whom 'ancient Hindus had a different notion of what is history' (p. 171) while comparing them to the Ahoms and their Buranjis. Here, one should not lose sight of the fact that for the nationalists, the terms 'Hindu' and 'Aryan' were synonymous in constructing a glorious unified 'nationalist past'. It is not clear if Misra is trying to induce the same idea in viewing the way Assamese history was projected.

A scholarly work of excellence, nevertheless, there is an exuding clarity of language in the way the author puts across her interpretations and ideas. An in-depth analysis and observance of facts enables her to look at the history of North-Eastern India from a perspective worth appreciating. She follows a chronological sequence of events while at the same time maintaining a thematic coherence and sequence. Thus, *Becoming A Borderland* can be considered significant in directing upcoming scholars dealing with borderland histories to look at the formation of identities as a result and a process of interactions between different groups and cultures and not just an articulation from above or from the subject under study. It breaks the belief that people should essentially remain where they were born, and that culture, language and tradition describe the 'natural' boundaries of their rightful domain. It does away with the need to control borders more tightly, even if the rhetoric is of inter-connectedness and global flows.

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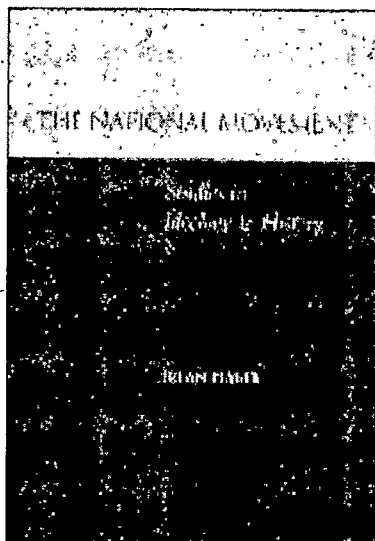
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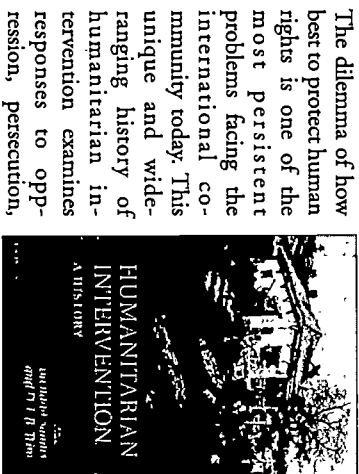
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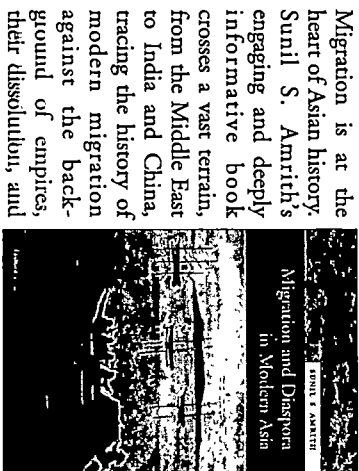
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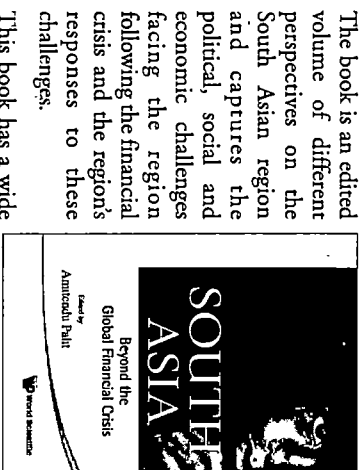
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Editorial Note

The current issue of *Social Scientist* carries the first instalment of the papers presented at a seminar organized by Sahmat on the Progressive Cultural Movement ('Awaaz Do: Legacy and Relevance of the Progressive Cultural Movement in India', 13–15 October 2011, New Delhi). There were a large number of papers presented at the seminar, and subsequent issues will be carrying other papers. In addition to the seminar papers, we are publishing two other pieces in the current issue. One is the Presidential Address of Munshi Premchand at the founding conference of the Progressive Writers' Association in 1936, and the other is a review article by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, then General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), on the collection of documents of the progressive cultural movement brought out by Sudhi Pradhan.

This review article was published originally in *The Marxist* and is being republished here both because the views of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a major participant in the progressive cultural movement from its inception and an incisive Communist thinker, are important in themselves, and also to underscore the point that the mainstream Left has always owned the legacy of this movement. An impression is often sought to be created in the media that this legacy had been disowned earlier and is being reclaimed only now, the Sahmat seminar itself being an instance of this attempt to reclaim.

This, however, is a travesty of the truth. The Party never disowned this legacy, even when, after independence and its Second Congress, it wanted this movement to turn in a different direction, in keeping with its own belief that the time had come for Communists to separate themselves from at least one section of the Nationalists. In short, even though the Party felt after its Calcutta Congress that the time had come to move away from the old theoretical position of 'United Front' adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, it never had either any remorse about its own stance on the progressive cultural movement of the thirties and forties, or any reservations about the role played by this movement at that time. While one can, and should, be legitimately critical of the theoretical position of the Second Congress of the Communist Party, historical verisimilitude demands that we should also recognize this fact.

An additional point should be noted here. The initiative for a rupture in the class alliance that had fought the anti-colonial struggle had come not from the Communists but from the powerful conservative element within

the Congress Party itself. True, a major difference had arisen between the Communists and the Congress over 1942. But it was not the Communists who wanted to keep themselves aloof because of this difference. The initiative for isolating them, and expelling those Communists who happened to be within the Congress, was taken by the Congress itself in 1946 when political power appeared within its grasp. And the difference over 1942 was used as an excuse to expel Communists from the Congress, many of whom had spent long years in jail as a consequence of the Quit India movement because, despite being Communists, they had also been members of the Congress. Unlike in South Africa where Communists continue to be members of the African National Congress even now, long after the end of the apartheid regime, in India the very appearance of decolonisation on the horizon made the Congress, under the influence of its powerful conservative leaders, expel the Communists from its ranks.

The Calcutta Congress can be criticized for its reading of the national and international situation, for its ultra-Left political line, and for not responding correctly to the new situation where the Congress Party was expelling Communists from within its ranks; but the rupture between the Congress Party and the Communists had occurred long before 1948, and the initiative for it had not come from the Communists.

This rupture was bound to affect the progressive cultural movement. Even if it had been less closely associated with the Communist Party, it could not have escaped the phenomenon of the new conjuncture. The questions of whether it could have done better than it did, and how it can be revitalised in the current period, are of paramount importance. Answering them requires an accurate reading not only of our history, but also of our present; and it requires above all a revival of discussion about this movement itself. It is towards such a revival that the papers of the current issue of *Social Scientist*, and of the issues to follow, will hopefully contribute.

Politics, Culture and Socialism

Prabhat Patnaik

The period from the beginning of the First World War until the end of the Second was one of acute crisis for world capitalism: apart from the two horrendous wars, it also witnessed the Great Depression which was the most acute economic crisis till then in the history of capitalism. It is not surprising that a very substantial section of the intelligentsia in virtually every country believed that the world had entered a period of 'general crisis of capitalism' from where there could only be a transition to socialism. This period brought acute distress to the working people everywhere, not only in the advanced countries but also in the third world. In India, for instance, while the Great Depression caused great absolute impoverishment of the peasantry, the long-term stagnation in foodgrain production under the colonial regime combined with the impact of military spending during the Second World War caused a massive increase in food prices, which precipitated the Bengal famine of 1943 that claimed three million lives.

It was also a period of resistance. The anti-colonial movement acquired an unprecedented thrust and sweep owing to the support it got from the distressed peasantry. And the awakening among the people expressed itself in the form of a series of militant struggles among the working masses. This period of crisis for world capitalism therefore also marked a huge world-wide revolutionary wave, which of course continued for some time even after the end of the war but which had begun to ebb by about 1950, though the long-delayed victory in Vietnam was the last episode of that upsurge.

The progressive cultural movement that emerged in India and elsewhere was as much a product of this revolutionary wave as an element contributing towards its strength. By the same token, however, the fact that the progressive cultural movement in the old form could not sustain its momentum in the 1950s and beyond was a reflection of the end of that revolutionary wave. I believe that after a gap of more than half a century, we are now witnessing the beginning of a new revolutionary wave against world capitalism, which of course will be different in its course of development, mode of mobilisation and self-perceived criteria of advance, compared to the earlier wave. This too will throw up its own revolutionary progressive cultural movement, whose nature again will be different from that of the old movement we are remembering today.

My purpose here is not to speculate on what the nature of the new cultural movement will be. It is to remind ourselves that in celebrating the old

cultural movement, we must not fall into the trap of believing that the task of progressive cultural movements must necessarily be confined only to what the old movement had set for itself, viz. contributing to the struggle for an end of exploitation through a change in property relations. Emancipation of the people requires not just a change in the property relations involving the overthrow of the existing ruling classes, but also a transcendence of the old social mores and institutions sustained through cultural practices that characterise the old order, for which progressive cultural movements must remain engaged in a continuous struggle. Progressive cultural movements must not just set for themselves the *grande* objective of overcoming the exploitative regime presided over by the big bourgeoisie and landlords. They must also be concerned, on a continuous basis, with a quotidian struggle against the caste-based patriarchal order which is far more durable than the specific exploitative classes presiding over it. Emancipation, in short, requires a permanent 'cultural revolution' (a term that should be distinguished both from Leon Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' and from the Chinese 'cultural revolution'). Progressive movements have to take this task too upon themselves. Let me elaborate.

Marxism conceptualises historical change in two phases: the destruction of the old community, and the re-creation of a new community. Capitalism is the means of destruction of the old community. The new community that comes into being under capitalism becomes the means of destruction of capitalism itself; the new community reaches its culmination in the establishment of socialism. The old community is one into which people happen to be born; they do not enter it voluntarily. The new community is one into which they enter voluntarily because of being identically placed in the capitalist production process, which forces them to combine, initially on economic demands but subsequently, as they theoretically comprehend the historical process, for concerted political action to transcend the system. The old community is characterised not only by exploitation by an overlord, a power outside of it, but even by inequalities in status within itself, i.e. among the exploited; and above all, it is a community that cripples the individual. Capitalism nominally liberates the individual but chains her or him to its immanent tendencies, so that the individual becomes a mere cog in the functioning of an impersonal and self-driven order. The real liberation of the individual occurs only through the new community, when individuals combine to intervene politically to effect a revolutionary overthrow of this 'spontaneous' order and usher in socialism. The liberation of the individual, paradoxically therefore, occurs only through the collective.

But in societies where capitalism appears late, is it possible for the old community to transform itself directly into the new community and thus by-pass the capitalist phase altogether? This is the question that had been

posed to Marx by Vera Zasulich, who had wondered whether it was possible to build socialism directly on the basis of the old Russian village commune, the *mir*. The question so intrigued Marx that he wrote as many as four different drafts of a letter in reply to Zasulich, in 1881. While not ruling out the possibility of such a direct transition, Marx also noted that the Russian village commune, where the ownership of land was vested in the community but the operation of land was by individual families among whom it was periodically redistributed in accordance with family size, contained within itself a dualism that might give rise to differentiation among the peasantry, undermining the 'economic superiority of communal ownership'. The idea that capitalism not only could develop but was actually developing through differentiation within the village community itself was put across emphatically by Lenin in his classic work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Indeed, by the turn of the century, there had been considerable changes in the Russian countryside, even compared to the time when Marx had written to Zasulich, and Lenin carefully documented these changes.

But Lenin's own analysis too, which was to provide the basis for the revolutionary agenda in third world countries in the twentieth century, visualised another kind of 'by-passing' of capitalism. The bourgeoisie, coming late on the historical scene, allied itself with the old feudal order, instead of dealing those decisive blows against it which thoroughgoing bourgeois revolutions, as in France, had done. The task of carrying forward the democratic revolution, for which the peasantry under the feudal yoke yearned, fell to the proletariat, since the bourgeoisie, afraid that an attack on feudal property might rebound upon itself as an attack on bourgeois property, was not equal to this task. What Lenin visualised was a worker-peasant alliance that would carry forward the democratic revolution and move on to the socialist revolution, though of course, at each stage in this process, the classes within the peasantry that the working class would ally itself with would keep changing. *Implicit in this view was a rejection of the position that the struggle for socialism must wait until capitalism had developed sufficiently.* (Lenin was later to strengthen this argument, which he had developed by 1907, by inserting it into his theory of imperialism and the need for breaking the imperialist chain at its 'weakest link'.)

Classical capitalism's destruction of the old order however had two distinct components: the first was an attack on *feudal property* and the creation of *petty property*; the second was an attack on *petty property* and the creation of *capitalist property*, so that '*private property*, based on personal labour ... will be supplanted by *capitalist private property*, based on the exploitation of the labour of others; on wage labour'.¹ As Paul Baran was to note later, the development of capitalism had entailed in the countryside first a revolution in favour of the peasantry and then a counter-revolution against it.² The Leninist conception of *revolutionary transformation* in Russia and other societies coming late to capitalism, by contrast, entailed the destruction of

feudal property and its conversion into petty property, *but not the expropriation of the petty producer*, i.e. it visualised the first of the two components but not the second. The idea rather was to convert petty property into large-scale property through the coming together of petty producers to form cooperatives and collectives.

Communist theorisation in the twentieth century therefore necessarily visualised not a replication of the process that capitalism had inflicted on the old order: *while it visualised the destruction of feudal property, it did not visualise the destruction of petty property; rather, it saw petty property getting transformed into collective property*. But this also meant that communist theory did not visualise a destruction of the old community; but rather its transformation, through stages and based on shifting class alliances, into something which would not be out of sync with the socialist project, i.e. with what the new community, based on the proletariat, was striving to achieve.

II

But this raised the all-important question: to what extent could the old community, even if it was rid of feudal exploitation, be made to conform to the new order coming into being under the leadership of the new community? Because if it could not be made to conform, then there was the possibility of the transition to socialism getting altogether subverted, in ways we shall have the occasion to discuss later.

This question in turn has two distinct dimensions, of which only one has been discussed at some length so far in communist literature. This has to do with the fact that petty commodity production generates capitalism through a process of internal differentiation within itself. In other words, even if capitalism does not make a comeback through a process of *expropriation* of petty producers, it may still make an appearance through a process of *differentiation* among petty producers, and this can happen even if the petty producers are collectivised, for there can still be differentiation among collective producers, just as Marx had visualised with regard to the *mir* in his letter to Vera Zasulich.

This, of course, was the big theoretical debate of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Chang Chun-Chiao, Wang Hun Wen, Yao Wen Yuan and Chiang Ching (the so-called 'gang of four') were obsessed with the fear that the vast numbers of petty commodity producers in China would provide, through internal differentiation, the genesis of a capitalist class. In fact this fear has haunted ruling communist regimes everywhere for long, which have therefore insisted upon restricting the scope of petty production, including even family production carried out with some hired help, for fear of a capitalist restoration. This has been the source of considerable damage for the economy. Indeed, the most recent economic reforms in Cuba are meant partly to rectify this (though I do not know enough to endorse the Cuban reforms *in toto*).

This fear of a capitalist restoration through differentiation among petty commodity producers, however, is greatly exaggerated, notwithstanding Lenin's striking remark *apropos* production (usually taken out of context) that capitalism is developing 'hourly' and 'daily' within it. This fear, in practice, has been the source of much counterproductive ultra-Left deviation in communist regimes. The reason I consider it exaggerated is simply because any emergence of capitalism through this route is too long drawn out a process *on its own*, i.e. seen in purely economic terms, for it to be a genuine threat for the survival of the socialist system.

Even Maurice Dobb who, in his famous work *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, downplayed the role of primitive accumulation of capital and emphasised this particular route, namely the process of differentiation among petty commodity producers, in the historical emergence of classical capitalism itself, saw this entire process working itself out over almost three centuries! And in our own country, we have now had petty commodity production for centuries and even millennia without there having been any notable historical tendency towards capitalist development through differentiation among such producers, i.e. through 'capitalism from below'.

The other dimension of this question, namely the threat posed to social transformation by the continued existence of the old community, albeit within a set of transformed property relations, which has received less attention, relates to a whole gamut of ideological beliefs and socio-cultural practices. Not only are they major barriers to the march towards socialism, but, *in conjunction with the tendency towards differentiation among petty commodity producers that may produce capitalist or proto-capitalist elements*, they can prove to be an almost insurmountable barrier. What is more, since the new community that emerges in societies where capitalism develops late is itself not altogether free of the ideological perceptions and socio-cultural practices of the old community, its capacity to break these perceptions and practices gets correspondingly attenuated, giving rise for instance to the emergence of feudal traits even among the most advanced segments of the proletarian leadership. The net result may be a social stasis that creates the conditions for a capitalist restoration, not 'from below', as the ultra-Left fears, but through creating propitious conditions for the intervention of imperialism.

Let us consider a hypothetical case to illustrate the point. Even though the caste system serves the interests of the feudal ruling class, the removal of this ruling class through a revolution that changes the property relations in the countryside does not *ipso facto* do away with the caste system. The old community, of which the caste system constitutes a defining characteristic, continues despite the removal of feudal (or proto-capitalist) landlords who, as the dominant exploiting class, were its earlier 'guardians'. In their case new 'guardians' spring up, recruited often from the better-off among the petty producers belonging to the old community, who now have the possi-

bility of strengthening their position because of the very elimination of the erstwhile exploiting class which held them in thrall, and who do realise this possibility because the process of differentiation among petty producers in the countryside favours them.

In other words, quite apart from the indubitable fact that ideological perceptions and cultural practices are not simply directly reducible to the property relations that underlie them, and have a life of their own and a durability that extends well beyond these property relations, the material roots of such ideological perceptions and cultural practices themselves may get nourishment even after the removal of the erstwhile exploiting class, not just despite but often because of such removal. The hope that the advanced leadership of the proletariat will intervene to act against such nourishment may also get belied for a number of reasons: first, because the advanced leadership itself may not be entirely free of these ideological perceptions and cultural practices. Even if the first generation leadership which ushers in the revolution may be free of these perceptions and practices, the same may not be true of subsequent generations, especially if the revolution remains isolated without sparking similar revolutions elsewhere. Secondly, in such conditions of isolation and encirclement, the tactical pressure 'not to rock the boat', to come to a sort of *modus vivendi* with the cultural practices and ideological perceptions of the old community, will be great, and succumbing to such pressure by a beleaguered leadership is all the more likely.

There is a third and more complex reason as well. The transition from the old to the new community entails a process of liberation of the individual. The individual consciously enters the new community as a thinking individual in the process of comprehending the historical process. As the comprehension increases, so does the individual's understanding of the need for the new community and commitment to it. One basic difference between the old and the new communities, therefore, consists in this: the old community suppresses the individual, while the new community is based on a freeing of the individual. But in a beleaguered socialist regime, the tendency, for tactical reasons again, to rein in the individual to ensure easy passage for decisions arrived at by the leadership will be strong. This reining in of the individual even within the new community may complement the suppression of the individual by the old community to produce an all-round conservative conformism that undermines the progress of the revolution.

Many have remarked, notably Rosa Luxemburg, on the tendency inherent in a 'democratic centralist' Party towards sheer centralism, on the one hand, and the de-politicisation and de-activation of the masses, on the other. But no matter what position one takes on *this*, the fact that the likelihood of this happening is greatly enhanced within a historical context where the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old community remain unimpaired, can scarcely be doubted.

It was mentioned earlier that the debate within the Chinese Cultural

Revolution centred around the capitalist tendency inherent in petty production, which might find expression through the leadership of the Communist Party itself (whence the slogans 'the bourgeoisie is inside the Party itself' and 'bombard the headquarters'). But, as against this perspective on the Cultural Revolution which was advanced by the so-called 'gang of four', there was an alternative perspective articulated in an interview which Zhou Enlai had given to Edgar Snow, where he had seen the necessity of the Cultural Revolution arising because of the hangover from the old traditional China, from the superstitions, the social conservatism, the patriarchal practices of yore, i.e. from what I have called 'the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old community'.

Of course, these two perspectives are not separate and irreconcilable; on the contrary, as suggested above, the survival of the old community also enhances the chances of distortion of the new community. None of this, needless to say, constitutes an argument for unleashing on society the unproductive anarchy of Red Guards on rampage, which is as incapable of liberating the individual in order to found upon such liberation the basis of a new community, as the alternative scenario of conservative conformism; the only limited point being made here is that the transition to socialism becomes impossible without breaking with some of the basic ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old community. And in a world where this break is not 'spontaneously' effected through an actual destruction of the old community itself, as happened under classical capitalism, it has to be essayed through cultural intervention by the 'organic intellectuals' of the new community.

The object of such intervention must not only be to break with patriarchy, exclusivism, anti-minorityism (which includes 'communalism' in our case), the caste system and its equivalents, xenophobia-xenophilia, and all manifestations of narrow localism, but above all, a freeing of the individual who is crippled under the old order. Cultural intervention must, of course, aim at activating the people against exploitation by making them aware of their true predicament; that goes without saying. But in addition, it has the task of struggling against the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old order so that the individual is freed from suppression, and can therefore acquire the theoretical comprehension to become free of the mechanism that produces communal, caste and gender oppression.

III

This argument may appear odd at first sight. Surely the purpose of progressive cultural movement in a society attempting to make a transition to socialism must be to introduce *socialist cultural values*. Why have I not mentioned this aspect till now? The reason is that the present paper attempts precisely to question this very understanding.

Socialism is not a mode of production on a par with the earlier modes of

production; the transition to socialism therefore cannot be a mere replication of the historical experience of transition to other modes of production. All previous modes of production have been characterised by the fact that their arrival has entailed a dichotomy between what people set out to achieve when they revolted against the pre-existing order and what they actually achieved. All previous modes of production, in short, have entailed humankind being trapped within a movement of history over which it has had no control. Socialism, by contrast, entails an escape from the 'trap of history', a significant and increasing measure of coincidence between the intentions behind people's collective historical actions and the actual outcome of such actions. It marks the end of 'spontaneity' through collective action that is founded upon a correct theoretical comprehension of the human condition. Socialism, for this reason, is not inevitable, not a *denouement* towards which history by its own movement will push humankind. It has to be worked for, on the basis of praxis that is grounded upon a correct theoretical comprehension.

The struggle for socialism, it follows, is marked by an intense theoretical endeavour on the part of every individual, and not the filling of people's minds with pebbles called 'socialist values' or 'socialist culture'. To be handed out something called 'socialist culture' or 'socialist values' that must be imbibed militates against the acquisition of a subject role by the working people; it implicitly entails viewing them as 'objects' rather than 'subjects', which defeats the very purpose of socialism.

Putting it differently, 'socialist culture' or 'socialist values' are what people will arrive at through theoretical praxis, for which, of course, discussion on what these terms may consist of has to be initiated by the leading elements of the proletariat, by the political formations engaged in theoretical praxis. But to view them as 'things' to be disseminated among the people would amount to 'reification'. In the name of facilitating the march to socialism, it would waylay that march. What the development of a 'socialist culture' requires, therefore, is liberation from the deadweight of the old community so that people can consciously engage in theoretical praxis; it requires what was argued earlier, namely a liberation of the individual from the oppression of the old community, a liberation of 'reason' from the deadweight of 'tradition'.

IV

So far I have been talking about transition to socialism. What can be said about countries like India which are not engaged in a transition to socialism but are pursuing instead a trajectory of capitalist development, and that too with great vigour?

There is a remarkable paradox about the capitalism that is developing here, and, for that matter, in other third world countries. While this capitalism is ruthless in the squeeze it imposes on petty producers (more than two

lakh peasants in India have committed suicide in the last decade), almost exactly the way that Marx had theorised, its capacity to enlarge the active army of wage labourers is extremely limited. As a result, either the petty producers linger on in an even more distressed and miserable condition in their traditional occupations, or they migrate to cities to join the reserve army of labour, doing odd jobs in what has come to be known euphemistically as the 'informal sector'.

In so far as the distressed petty producers linger on in their traditional habitats for want of opportunities in the capitalist sector, the old community does not get destroyed. Capitalism's encroachment on the livelihood of petty producers, its pushing petty production to a point where even simple reproduction at the customary level of subsistence becomes impossible, does not lead, as in the case of classical capitalism, to a destruction of the old community. And in so far as the size of the active army of labour employed by capitalism remains meagre, the formation of the new community remains stunted, which in turn also contributes to the continuance of ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old community.

In short, notwithstanding the vigour of the capitalist development and the material squeeze on the petty producers, the ideology and cultural practices of the old community do not get sufficiently undermined. And finally, in so far as the size of the reserve army of labour swells, often under the guise of 'informal sector employment' or 'casual work', an underclass or a lumpen-proletariat is created which falls easy prey to exclusivist and communal-fascist ideologies, or can be manipulated into becoming flag-bearers for movements subscribing to such ideologies. These ideologies, though 'modern' in one sense (certainly in the sense that they usually enjoy the active support of finance capital), nonetheless have lineages in the ideological perceptions of the old community.

Thus, even the task of *formally liberating the individual* from his or her roots within a caste or communal grouping, which capitalism traditionally is credited with doing, remains unaccomplished by the capitalism developing in countries like India, notwithstanding their vigour expressed through high GDP growth. Since such formal liberation of the individual from thralldom to the old community is an important hallmark of 'modernity', capitalist development in India, no matter how rapid, fails to bring genuine 'modernity'. It produces a kitsch where swank shopping malls and outsize automobiles coexist with *khap panchayats* and female foeticide, with some of the very persons frequenting the malls or riding the automobiles being votaries of *khap panchayats* and female foeticide.

Classical capitalism's ability to introduce such 'modernity', which in turn hinged upon its ability to ensure that the destruction of the old community did not just result in magnified unemployment and underemployment, is usually attributed by Marxists to its inherent dynamism. But this does not necessarily, in my view, represent a correct reading of the historical

situation. The fact that the destruction of petty production simply did not swell the reserve army of labour was due largely to massive emigration from the countries where classical capitalism developed to countries of the so-called 'new world'. For nearly a century until the First World War, for instance, around half the increase in Britain's population every year emigrated to the temperate regions of white settlement, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In the period between the middle of the nineteenth century and the First World War, 50 million persons from Europe emigrated to these temperate lands, where they drove the local inhabitants off their lands and started cultivating these lands.

The availability of such lands and hence the relatively high standard of living that could be enjoyed through such emigration also accounted for the increase in wages that the workers at home obtained from their capitalist employers. And, of course, it made possible the destruction of the old community and the liberation of the individual from its thralldom. What is attributed to the so-called innate historical dynamism of capitalism often turns out on closer look to have been caused by capitalism's ability to establish its control over the rest of the world; and the present case is one example of this phenomenon.

The inability of capitalism in countries like India to bring about a formal liberation of the individual from thralldom to the old community, therefore, is linked to the fact that it does not have any further scope for colonising the world. In these countries, the task historically achieved by bourgeois development, namely the destruction not just of feudal property but of the old community itself, cannot be accomplished by capitalism, no matter how rapidly it develops in material terms. This twin task has to be accomplished by the forces struggling for the socialist order.

The progressive cultural movement which is linked to these forces must therefore fight, in its own terrain, not only against the exploitative order presided over by the bourgeoisie, allied with the rich landed interests, but also against the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old order, against caste, patriarchy, communalism and all forms of suppression of the individual by the so-called 'traditions' of the old community. This latter struggle is a permanent struggle that stretches from the present until the establishment of a new order. But since the establishment of such a new order is not a finished thing, ending by a particular date, but rather an open-ended process, the struggle against these ideological perceptions and cultural practices constitutes, in this sense, a permanent cultural revolution.

Many Western Marxists totally reject the idea of a country delinking itself from the contemporary global order as part of a revolutionary process of transition to socialism. The nationalism that must ideologically underlie such delinking is suspect in their eyes for being inward-looking and hence potentially reactionary. (The examples of Slobodan Milosevic and others are usually given to drive home the point.) But if globalisation under the

hegemony of international finance capital (for which the term 'imperialist globalisation' is often used as a short-hand expression) is to be opposed, then, in the absence of a coordinated international struggle of the working people, there is no alternative to such struggles being nation-based, and hence, to delinking being a central part of the agenda. In fact, there is little coordination in the struggles of the working class across countries; the question of coordination of struggles of the peasantry has not even arisen.

Hence the only available weapon for fighting imperialist globalisation and the hegemony of international finance capital that underlies it, is through a worker-peasant alliance in individual countries, with an agenda of delinking from this global order in order to essay changes in property relations within these countries. To say this, however, does not mean dismissing the fears raised by the Western Marxists. Such a process of delinking does contain within itself the possibility that the revolutionary break may get swamped by its isolation, that it may end up strengthening reactionary tendencies rooted in the old community. Overcoming this is not easy; but progressive cultural movements, as part of a permanent cultural revolution, constitute a key element in any such revolutionary praxis.

Notes

- 1 Marx's Letter to Vera Zasulich, first draft.
- 2 Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1957.

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Progressive Cultural Movement in India: A Critical Appraisal

K N Panikkar

The All India Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA) have completed 75 and 70 years respectively. The formation of these organisations in 1930s is a landmark in the cultural history of India, as they heralded a new sensibility in depicting the contemporary social and political realities. They brought about an intellectual break which led to a qualitative transformation of the creative realm, resulting in the production of some outstanding works of art and literature. For some time at least, they represented the cultural avant-garde, which foregrounded radical and progressive cultural practices by taking cognisance of the problems of the oppressed, and by confronting feudal conservatism and capitalist imperialism. Recalling the contribution of this movement is therefore in order, which can be undertaken in two different ways: first, by cataloguing its achievements and recounting its positive impact on cultural creativity; and secondly, by a critical introspection about its present state and tracing its relationship with the past. This essay undertakes to do the latter with a view to reflect upon the possible future course, drawing out of past experience but not necessarily as a continuation.

The progressive cultural movement, considered a tumultuous episode in the intellectual history of India by many, has now become a pale shadow of the past. In fact, an all-India movement does not exist any more. Instead, language-based regional organisations function by claiming the legacy of the earlier all-India movement. More importantly, the regional movements do not claim a substantial following of cultural activists, nor do they have the support of well-known cultural personalities, as in the past. In a way this is a paradox, as the majority of cultural practitioners in India entertain what can be broadly characterised as a 'Left of the Centre' ideological and political position. Now, most of them either stand alone or function as members of small groups without any specific ideological or political commitment. On several national issues they share common ground, but they do not lend their voice jointly to them. The progressive cultural movement has not been able to bring this mass of cultural practitioners under its umbrella or provide a platform for them to articulate their ideas. Consequently, the majority of cultural activists are outside the sphere of influence of the progressive movement. The inability of the movement to intervene effectively even in major issues, either through cultural creativity or intellectual enquiry, has marginalised the movement.

Nevertheless, in some regions there is comparatively better organisational presence even if the creative achievements are not very substantial. In Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Bengal and Kerala, the movement commands some influence and support, mainly because it has expanded its support base by incorporating intellectual workers into the movement. Even in these regions, however, the movement seems to have lost its verve and is unable to respond creatively to the emerging cultural reality. As a result, social issues like Dalit exploitation or gender oppression or tribal exclusion are, by and large, external to the progressive cultural concerns. It has become more a movement of nostalgia, looking for inspiration from its achievements in the past rather than inventing innovative ways of engaging with the present. On the whole the movement appears to suffer from an inability to locate itself in the fast-changing cultural conditions and hence tries to cling to the legacy bequeathed by the formative phase of the movement. Critics of the movement allege that it has become an anachronism, out of step with contemporary reality. As a result, in most regions of the country the movement is floundering in wilderness without a sense of direction.

Two reasons are generally attributed to this state of affairs. The first is insufficient intellectual and cultural resources to deal with the rapidly changing cultural situation; secondly, the failure to create a broad spectrum of cultural engagement in which those who believe in liberal and democratic ideals can participate. The main purpose of this essay is to examine if the conceptual categories employed by the movement have been adequate to interrogate the changing forms of reality and to shape its interventionist strategies.

Legacy of Concepts

Almost all cultural organisations owing allegiance to the Left ideology claim the legacy of the progressive cultural movement, either implicitly or explicitly. They also draw upon the conceptual categories initially employed by the movement. For present-day cultural activism, the persistence of these categories is both an inspiration and an impediment. They serve as an inspiration because of their past achievements; at the same time, they act as an impediment because their content and meaning have substantially changed. The burden of the latter adversely affects the possible diversification of activities. The conceptual categories employed by the progressive cultural movement in its formative phase were influenced by the then prevailing social and political conditions, and the nature of the tasks it had set for itself. Most of the concepts continue to persist in the vocabulary of the movement even today, although their content and meaning have substantially changed. The manifestos of all progressive associations which collectively constituted the movement shared the same concepts and categories – for example, progress, the people, class struggle, imperialism, feudalism, etc. – in the make-up of their ideological, cultural and political perspectives. The conceptual

world of the movement still revolves around these categories, without being sensitive to the changes in their character and content. For instance, 'progressive' was the key concept around which the movement was initially organised. Subsequently, almost everyone involved with the movement has tried to interpret the meaning of progress. The idea of progress that the movement invoked is expressed in three different sources: first, in the manifestos of all the associations; secondly, in the statements and declarations of the early organisers of the movement; thirdly, in the creative works generated by the movement.

Collectively, all these sources conceived progress as qualitative change from the existing political and social conditions. The role and purpose of progressive culture was to promote these changes by creating the necessary social sensitivity which would enable the participation of the people in this process. The Manifesto of the All India Progressive Writers' Association laid down its notion of progress in unambiguous terms:

We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the problem of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and unreason we reject as reactionary. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and customs in the light of reason, which helps us to act, to organise ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive.

The progressive thus meant realisation of social and political change which would put an end to the feudal and colonial order, and usher in a state of consciousness transgressing the conservative. The meaning of progress, therefore, was historically specific. The aim of progressive culture, however, was not limited to changing the conditions in the material world. It was equally concerned with elevating literature, theatre and other forms of culture to higher levels of creativity. Its task was to provide cultural inputs for the realisation of these goals. In his Presidential Address to the first All India Progressive Writers' Conference held at Lucknow on 10 April 1936, Munshi Premchand drew attention to this dimension:

We shall consider only that literature as progressive which is thoughtful, which awakens in us the spirit of freedom and of beauty; which is creative, which is luminous with the realities of life; which moves us; which leads us to action and which does not act on us as a narcotic; which does not produce in us a state of intellectual somnolence – for if we continue to remain in that state it can only mean that we are no longer alive.

Progress and Tradition

The combination of the political and the creative which thus defined the progressive movement inevitably raised questions about the place of tradition in the new cultural practices. Given the power conservatism exercised

over the traditional creative realm, it became imperative for the movement to take cognisance of the implications of its influence. This however involved the danger of bracketing conservatism with tradition, and therefore it was necessary to make a clear distinction between the two. While the latter was treated critically but constructively, there was considerable hesitation in rejecting the former. This uncompromising attitude towards conservatism was clearly spelt out in the Manifesto:

The very purpose of our association is to liberate literature and other fine arts from the fatal grasp of the conservatives and, making them the interpreter of the suffering and happiness and the struggle of the people, to show the path of the bright future towards which mankind is striving.

The attitude towards tradition, however, was marked by some ambiguity and uncertainty, informed by nostalgia for the traditional classical tradition with an acute awareness about its decline and resulting backwardness. In his Presidential Address to the inaugural conference, Premchand repeatedly referred to the distinction between the 'sterility, degeneration and inaction' of past cultural practices, and the dynamism of the progressive movement. The view adopted by the Manifesto also deplored the breakdown of classical culture resulting in the fatal tendency to escape the actualities of life. Yet, none of them dismissed the past as irrelevant. On the contrary, the consensus was for building a new future on the foundations provided by tradition. The only aberration was the voice of Ahmed Ali, a founding member of the movement, who castigated the art of the past as 'mythological, decaying and obscurantist'. Critical of writers like Muhammad Iqbal and Rabindranath Tagore who he chastised as 'morbidly escapist', he stood for complete rejection of the past. Ali represented the early sectarian and dogmatic stream within the movement, even though he broke away from it in 1939, accusing the Communists of a sectarian and negative attitude.

The movement, however, took a critical but constructive and sympathetic view of tradition as represented by Sajjad Zaheer, who stood for the 'defence of our old culture and development, through proper criticism of the past, of a new culture'. A more forceful statement was made by Maulana Abdul Haq in 1937 in his speech at the Urdu Progressive Writer's conference in Allahabad:

The idea that everything connected with the previous age is vitiated by reactionism is not correct. We should not break our link with the past just because we have advanced. Doing this is tantamount to cutting our roots. We are the heirs of the past and if an heir is oblivious of his past and not aware of it to the fullest extent, then however intelligent, active and revolutionary he may be, he can neither affect any reform, nor can he himself derive any benefit [from the past]. Therefore, it is the obligation of every progressive writer to study the literature of the past and to see to what extent ours has

the capacity for advancement. What things are to be abandoned and what means are necessary to elevate literature to a high position.

It is possible that this constructive attitude towards tradition was one of the reasons that attracted a large number of the liberal intelligentsia to the progressive movement. The reverse is equally true. The sectarian view of tradition which the movement adopted later was partly responsible for the dissociation of several supporters.

From the very beginning the movement spoke in the name of people and foregrounded the popular. Both these categories were repeatedly invoked by the activists as a distinguishing feature of the movement. It involved the retrieval of popular culture as well as its reorientation to take cognisance of the cultural concerns of the people. But who constituted the people? In the popular Left tradition, 'the people' consists of those without power in society and who live at the margins. The implication of this conceptualisation is that the cultural achievements of the upper classes are excluded from the purview of people's culture. An alternative view is that the entire population as a whole constitute the people, not as a homogenous entity but as a differentiated category. In the latter conception the cultural achievements of the entire society constitute its heritage, even if the culture of the dominant classes exercises hegemonic functions. The proletarian culture, Lenin had argued, would be poorer if it excluded the classical heritage from its repertoire. E.M.S. Namboodiripad had entertained a similar view about classical tradition, and wondered how poor culture would be if traditional cultural forms like Kudiattam, Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, etc., were excluded from the national cultural heritage. Yet, the distinction between the elite and the people which the movement emphasised made hitherto neglected sections of society the object of cultural concern, as in the case of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, or Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Thottiyude Makan* and *Randidangazhi* in Malayalam, or the attempts to retrieve folk and tribal cultural practices. More importantly, the shift in focus from the privileged to the marginalised introduced class struggle, in however crude a manner, as a theme of literature and other cultural productions. In most of them class struggle was conceived rather mechanically, in terms of resistance to capitalists' oppression of peasants. Nevertheless, it signified not only a thematic shift, but also the expression of a new cultural sensitivity.

Culture and Politics

A fundamental change in perspective that the progressive movement brought about was in the conception of the relationship between culture and politics. Instead of excluding politics from cultural concerns, the movement brought it to centrestage. European writers like Maxim Gorky, Andre Gide, E.M. Foster, Andre Malraux and others who initiated the progressive movement were moved by the dangers inherent in Fascism and the exploit-

ative nature of imperialism. They held that taking cognisance of politics was imperative as politics 'not merely impinged upon the artistic arena – it intruded, infiltrated and imposed its will'.

Progressive cultural movements in India entertained a similar view of the relationship between politics and culture. They recognised the prevailing political conditions controlled by imperialism as an impediment to cultural practices and the need to develop alternative politics. The first draft of the Manifesto of the PWA suggested that 'the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the problem of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection'. The revised draft of the Manifesto reworded this to read as follows: 'We want a new literature of India to make as its subject the basic problems of our life. These problems are those of hunger, poverty, social backwardness and slavery.' Translated into the then prevailing Indian situation, this meant opposition to colonialism and feudalism, and consequent establishment of an egalitarian society. The role of culture conceived by the movement, however, was instrumentalist in nature; namely, its aim was to advance anti-colonial and anti-feudal consciousness in society. In the words of Mulk Raj Anand, the aim of the movement was to promote 'the struggle of the peoples of the world against imperialism, its twin brother Fascism, its older aunt Feudalism and all other aunts who refuse to let the new shoots of life burst into the future'. As a result, all forms of culture at the command of the movement were employed to advance this objective. The movement thus evolved a perspective for cultural action dictated by political imperatives. This legacy, it appears, exercised a strong influence on the current state of the movement.

The objective conditions prevailing in the country as well as the meaning of categories and practices bequeathed by the movement has undergone fundamental changes in the post-independence period. The colonial has become neo-colonial and feudalism has given way to capitalism. The policies of liberalisation and globalisation which the State has embraced have generated a new cultural complex, mirroring the interests and image of advanced capitalism. The market has become the cultural metaphor of imperialist subjugation. Another development is the increasing influence of communalism over the popular social consciousness. As a result, the cultural sensitivity of the middle class is fashioned by the capitalist ethos, on the one hand, and their social and ideological perspectives are coloured by communalism, on the other. In these circumstances, the survival of progressive cultural practices faces very serious threat. Extricating the movement from this situation requires a paradigmatic change which would usher in new programmatic and theoretical initiatives.

Cultural Intervention and Intervention in Culture

The cultural activism necessary in this juncture can be encapsulated into two major tasks: first, cultural intervention that would promote the forma-

tion of counter-hegemony, what Harold Pinter in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech described as 'the entry into oppression's closed door'. Secondly, the creation of popular critical consciousness through uninterrupted and continuous cultural interventions. The progressive cultural movement has to undertake these twin tasks if it hopes to provide leadership to the emerging cultural struggles. Whether the movement, given its limited organisational strength and inadequate conceptual equipment, is capable of undertaking such a task appears doubtful, unless it makes a conceptual and programmatic departure from the current methods. This should be understood in the light of two objective realities. First, changes in the objective conditions during the last fifty years; secondly, the indifference or inability of cultural practitioners to relate these changes to creative endeavours. Instead, the movement continues to invoke these categories, although their meaning and content have undergone substantial changes, as if they have remained static.

The progressive cultural movement is closely connected with the Left parties and function as their front organisation. The implication of this relationship is that cultural organisations are subordinated to political control and that their freedom to take independent initiative is adversely affected. Paradoxically, there is a mismatch between political control over the cultural domain and the importance attributed to cultural struggles. In recent years, cultural struggles have hardly figured in Left political strategies. At the same time, the subjection of the movement to political control has adversely affected the independent character of the former. Consequently, it has led to a loss of support from the fairly large constituency of writers and cultural activists who were liberal and sympathetic to the Left. Nirala, Sumitranadan Pant, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Raghuvir Sahai, Nirmal Varma and a large number of other writers in Hindi had adopted this path. In Malayalam, with the exception of very few, almost all writers were sympathetic to the movement. M.P. Paul, Joseph Mundasseri, G. Sankara Kurup, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, P. Kesava Dev and Vallathol Narayana Menon are some of them. But very soon they all either dissociated themselves from the movement or turned hostile.

The ideological and cultural situation today is qualitatively different from the 1930s. The nature of operation of imperialism has changed. It has acquired new ideological and intellectual equipment for the extension of its influence. Capitalism has become all-pervasive and its ideology has become immensely more powerful. Class struggle has assumed new forms and all classes are in a state of flux. Communalism has developed new strategies. As a result, a critical consideration of the categories and concepts which the movement has inherited from its formative phase has become imperative. The movement cannot but be alive to this necessity if it is to overcome the present state of stagnation. It appears that some of the regional movements have undertaken self-introspection with a view to address the new challenge.

This is most visible in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Both these regions have subjected existing practices to critical scrutiny and, consequently, have revised both theoretical formulations and programmatic policies.

Rise and Fall of United Front

The progressive cultural movement was conceived by its progenitors as a broad platform

of the intellectuals of India, the largest block of writers who, whatever their difference in the standpoints, whatever their contradictions of philosophical, religious and cultural belief, join for common actions, in the defence of our old culture, and development, through a proper criticism of the past, of a new culture.

Such a view enabled the movement to develop a non-sectarian character and attract all progressive elements, regardless of differences in their political perspectives. 'It is of utmost importance', wrote Mulk Raj Anand, 'that we must unite, all of us, irrespective of class, creed and status, in spite of our varying methods of approach to the fundamental problems of life to save our civilisation.' The creation of such a platform was intended to gain the support and participation of the 'creative mass', even if they did not subscribe to Marxist ideas. Those who were drawn to the united front shared the view that cultural work should be purposeful and socially progressive. The cultural production during this period of united front, be it in literature, theatre or music, reflected these twin principles. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand's novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Yashpal's *Rajyadrohi*, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Tottiyude Makan* and *Randidangazhi*, and Kesavadev's *Odayil Ninnu* presented a new reading experience, not only because of their thematic variation, but also because of their social and political radicalism. So too in the theatre: K. Damodaran's *Pattabakki*, however contrived its theme, appealed to the rural population as it presented a vision of emancipation in the future.

The united front had its most productive and influential period during 1944-48 when the movement tried to 'link up the economic and political struggles of the working people with the struggle for their cultural advancement', and thus gain the support of a popular mass of cultural participants. The movement succeeded in attracting a large number of prominent writers and theatre activists to its fold. However, in the post-1948 period differences developed between the Left and the liberal sections, and the former abandoned the movement, which led to the collapse of the united front. The main reason for desertion cited by the liberal section was the big brother attitude of the Communists and their attempt to impose discipline on the movement. Dismissing this argument, E.M.S. Namboodiripad had put forward an alternative explanation, that the united front suffered from an inner contradiction. While the liberal members were prepared to accept the basic

objective of the movement, that social progress is the objective of cultural activism, they were not prepared to accept that social progress can be achieved only through working-class leadership. The split in the movement, according to Namboodiripad, was a result of this contradiction and not due to the sectarianism of the Communist members. Whatever the reason, the result was disastrous for the progressive cultural movement. The liberal section of the movement withdrew and some of them turned hostile, and some others even denounced the movement. The Communists on their part gave up the idea of a united front and chose to plough a lonely furrow. Consequently, the progressive movement was isolated from the cultural struggles of the people, and, by the 1970s, had almost lost its following and organisational strength.

This discomfiture of the movement did not lead to its permanent abandonment. Namboodiripad raised three relevant questions in this context. First, is it necessary to forge a united front between those working in the worker-peasant organisations and those who are outside them? Secondly, if the answer to the above question is in the affirmative, does not the responsibility to preserve the alliance rest with those outside worker-peasant organisations? Thirdly, since the united front had already collapsed, is there any meaning in trying to revive it? Namboodiripad's contention was that the political strategy of bringing together as many friends as possible against the class enemy should be followed in the cultural field also. He made this suggestion in 1971 in order to revive the idea of a united front. It proved to be a signal for the revival of the movement, drawing lessons from the pre-1948 period.

Revival of Regional Movements

The idea mooted by Namboodiripad took quite some time to germinate. Although politically united front had become acceptable practice, in the cultural field the previous experiment had left too many scars. Many had become sceptical of it, some even hostile to it. Therefore the revival and regrouping of progressive movements faced far too many impediments. They included the influence of modern and post-modern tendencies, which tended to counter basic premises like the social commitment of progressive culture, as well as the emergence of a new aesthetic sensibility in society. Successful re-emergence of progressive culture depended upon the ability to engage with this new situation. It was in this context that attempts were initiated to regroup and revive the progressive cultural movements. At the forefront of such efforts were Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

In Kerala the movement was re-established and rechristened as Purogamana Kala Sahitya Sangam in 1985. The formation of the Sangham was the culmination of an extended critical introspection into the past experience of the movement initiated in 1971, a process in which E.M.S.

Namboodiripad had taken an active part. The review of past experience covered the changes in the objective conditions, the challenge of modernism and post-modernism, and the mistakes committed by the progressive movement. The ideas emerging out of this introspection were codified in 1985 in a pamphlet entitled *Writers and the Challenges of the Age*, and in a document adopted at the conference at Perumbavur in 1991. These documents underlined the need to adopt new perspectives and new forms of activities in order to deal with the changed conditions. However, they did not spell out what these new forms would be, except for claiming in a rather rhetorical fashion that the present age has opened a 'royal path' before the movement. Nevertheless, the document adopted at the Perumbavur conference and the cultural policy statement of the Ottappalam conference marked a healthy departure, inasmuch as they undertook a frank and critical assessment of the past practices of the movement. They underscored the theoretical weaknesses with which the movement had laboured in the past, and the limitations of realism which the movement had pursued as an ideal.

The documents took a self-critical view in three important areas: first, the nature of relationship between form and content; secondly, the relationship between culture and politics; and thirdly, the question of social commitment of creative workers. In the first, the movement revisited the earlier debate about form and content in which the Communists had opposed the importance ascribed to form in favour of progressive content. It was conceded that the primacy attributed to content was a mechanical view, which, it was argued, should have been replaced by a dialectical view of the relationship between form and content. They confessed that in the anxiety to oppose the conservative view that artists should invariably dissociate themselves from politics, the movement had adopted a position that without politics cultural practice has no useful existence. Similarly, they conceded that social commitment alone would not make cultural work progressive or outstanding, as had been earlier contended. It was also realised that even the quality of works of art and literature is not necessarily determined by social commitment. Organisationally also, they realised the necessity of change. Therefore a more open system was advocated, with free participation for all interested in art and culture, thereby widening its base.

It appeared that the united front policy of the pre-1948 period was back on the rails. Not quite, because by then democratic centralism had struck deep roots in the Party and its front organisations. As a result, the possibility of attracting the 'broad liberal Left' to the movement, despite the sincere intention to do so, became very remote. In order to project its new image, the Purogamana Kala Sahitya Sangham drew up a rather ambitious and exhaustive programme, which covered organisational, creative, intellectual and social dimensions. In the new programme, the emphasis was on decentralisation of activities, promotion of folk culture, encouragement of classical cultural forms, ensuring the participation of women and so on. The

programme was an assortment of several reformist measures, and lacked the central thrust and direction necessary for a Left-oriented movement. Categories like class, class struggle, progress, imperialism, etc., which were central to the movement during its formative phase, were conspicuous by their absence in the new programme. Some of these figured in the general statement without being adequately sensitive to their changed character and establishing their possible connection with the new programme. As a result, most of them faltered at the level of implementation and therefore remained as wishful thinking. This was primarily because the complexities that categories like class, class struggle and progress had gained since the formative period of the movement were not adequately addressed.

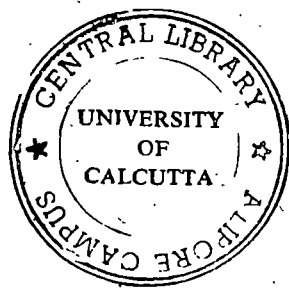
The Perumbavur and Ottappalam documents were further elaborated in the conference at Kollam, which essentially was a restatement of the former, but detailing the political and elaborating the programmatic. None of these efforts, however, represented a fundamental departure from the past and hence did not result in generating a popular upsurge in their favour. The progressive literary movement in Kerala is therefore in a sluggish state. The story of Kerala is true of other states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where the movement has been trying to reactivate its work. The Hindi-speaking belt is much worse: the movement is almost extinct there.

Despite the attempts to reinvigorate the movement through fresh organisational and programmatic initiatives, they have not succeeded in making an impact in most regions. The question therefore arises, why has a movement which had begun with so much promise and commanded considerable support now come to such a dismal state? Two reasons, among many, may be considered plausible. First, the degeneration of the relationship between culture and politics to subordination of culture to politics during the post-1948 period, and eventual control by political forces which do not assign an important role to cultural struggles both in theory and practice. Theoretically culture is considered an epi-phenomenon; consequently, cultural struggles are relegated to a secondary status. As a result, the relationship between politics and culture has ceased to be creative and dialectical, which has not only adversely affected creativity, but also led to the exclusion of independent minds from the movement. A recent attempt to reach out to them has only resulted in ideological obfuscation.

Secondly, following the path and principles advocated by the movement during its formative period, it has pursued two inter-related strategies in its cultural work: an instrumentalist use of culture, and cultural intervention for political mobilisation. In the first, different cultural practices like literature, songs, paintings, plays, etc., were used for political propaganda. A large part of early Left literature, which focused on feudal and capitalist exploitation and resulting class struggles, belonged to this category. Most of them were rather crude representations, failing to capture the finer sentiments of human life in a sensitive manner. As a result they could not make an impact

even on those who were committed to the Left cause, let alone on the general public. In cultural intervention, culture is used to take cognisance of specific practices like casteism and religious superstitions, and a critique of these practices was mounted through specific cultural forms. These cultural interventions did not intervene in culture and therefore did not help transform cultural consciousness. The change could have taken place only if the interventions were not only cultural, but also interventions in culture. This would be possible only if a dialectical relationship between Left politics and culture is a reality. Bringing about such a relationship alone can make progressive culture really progressive.

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The Progressive Movement in Its International Setting

Aijaz Ahmad

In this paper, I will comment largely on what I have called 'the international setting' of the progressive movement as such. This, I want to do for several reasons. First, by the time I was invited to speak at this seminar [*Awaaz Do: Legacy and Relevance of the Progressive Cultural Movement in India*, 13–15 October 2011, New Delhi], a basic structure of presentations had been worked out and I could see that no discussion of the international context was projected in the programme, so I thought I would try to fill the gap.

Second, I actually like the word 'International': the concept, the solidarity, the song. Today – when we hear so much about globalisation, universal human rights, the international community, etc. – it is, I think, very important to restore to the word 'international' the meaning that revolutionary movements of two centuries, the nineteenth and the twentieth, gave to it. For progressive movements of the past – and for progressive movements of the present or of the future – 'international' is not only a 'setting'; it is also the name of a fundamental value, the very condition that gives to the Indian progressive movement a crucial part of its impetus and indeed its character. I shall return to this question of the larger impetus and character, and my conception of it is rather more complicated than what most people suppose. But, on the question of the international setting, I do feel compelled to say something else as well.

I take it that most of us in this room identify ourselves with legacies of the progressive movement, or else we won't be here. If that is true, then we must be aware of the fact that this seminar itself is taking place – at this time, in the October of this extraordinary year – in an extraordinary international setting. 2011 is turning out to be a bit like 1968. In the political storms of that time, one military dictatorship was overthrown, in neighbouring Pakistan; this year has seen the fall of two dictatorships, in Tunisia and Egypt. At the heart of those earlier uprisings was the Tet Offensive which changed the fortunes of the Vietnam War, and of Indochina as a whole. Today, the potential consequences of the so-called 'Arab Spring' are such that Leon Panetta, who was then the CIA chief and now serves as the US Secretary of Defence, submitted to his government in April this year a Top Secret report which says that if Israel does not recognise the changing configuration of power in the Middle East and make peace with the Palestinians, it may cease to exist in twenty years. It is to reverse these potentials that a military dictatorship has been established in Egypt, Libya has been invaded, and the incremental

strangulation of Syria is getting organised through a remarkable coalition that includes Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Lebanese Rightwing and NATO, including NATO's Islamicists in Turkey.

Elsewhere, the storm of protests, demonstrations and uprisings that began in countries as diverse as France, Iceland and Ireland has raged most persistently in Greece, then enveloped Spain, Israel and Chile, and now seems to be crossing the Atlantic to arrive in the US itself, as something of a movable feast, from one city to the next. I can't go into details but, on the New York protests, I do want to quote the well-known writer Eve Ensler, who says, 'Occupy Wall Street is a work of art, exploding on to a canvas in search of form, in search of an image, a vision.' This characterisation is both an indirect criticism, in the sense that the protesters know what they oppose but have little sense of a political alternative, but also something of a compliment, in the sense that a new political consciousness, perhaps even a new revolutionary form, is very much in the making – there, and elsewhere.

We can discuss all this in detail some other time. But three things about this ongoing 'international setting' I would like to say. First, India is one of the few countries that have remained utterly quiescent in the midst of this transcontinental storm; we did have a small flickering that was greatly magnified by the media but on the innocuous little issue of the Lokpal Bill, and one that was organised not from the Left but from the Right. Second, I have argued for some fifteen years now that the collapse of the Soviet Union did indeed bring a whole historical epoch to a close, and peoples around the world were now bound to experiment with new revolutionary forms. It follows, therefore, that what we have witnessed in Latin America for the past decade or so, and what is now raging all over Europe and the Arab world, is precisely a massive experimentation with diverse ways and means of popular uprising until a revolutionary form is found that will be adequate to revolutions of the twenty-first century.

Permeation of the Political with the Aesthetic

My third point is that what these countless people across continents are searching for are not only new political forms, but also new aesthetic forms, indeed the ways in which the aesthetic now permeates the political, so that radical politics and novel forms of the aesthetic emerge together, as two faces of a single emancipatory desire. What we witnessed in Tahrir Square, for instance, was not only the will among tens of thousands of people to stand the ground, for weeks, until the dictatorship fell, but also hundreds of painters producing a festival of colours, poets reciting new poems composed on the spot, singers who sang through the nights, and bands that played on, even as almost a thousand of their compatriots were killed by the regime's goons and the security forces. This permeation of the political with the aesthetic has been a feature not only of the Egyptian uprising but virtually all uprisings this year and in the recent past, from Bolivia to Greece, and now in the little

uprisings in the US as well. I might add that this sense of the creative and the festive has been one of the features that distinguishes the genuine popular uprisings of our time from those other uprisings, in Libya and Syria, that have been manufactured, funded and weaponised by imperialism. In Libya, there was no rebel music, but certainly the hellfire of NATO's aerial invasion that involved perhaps as many as 40,000 sorties.

I apologise for detaining you so much on the present whereas we are assembled here in an act of remembrance, mainly to invoke an honourable heritage of the past. This starting-point in the immediate present has to do with my conviction that what we call the progressive movement is not only an achieved compendium of the works of art and literature, nor only a roster of the names of artists, writers, poets, theatre groups, film personalities and others who made a particular movement possible with their memorable contributions. It surely is all that, but the progressive movement is also the name of a historical process whose story ought not be told in the familiar terms of origins and endings, rise and fall. Nor should it be thought of as something *sui generis*, as a sudden emergence, or a simple overturning of the past. Let me clarify this point with the help of an analogy, by recalling Lukacs' well-known argument that there can be no socialist realism of any lasting value if it does not assimilate within itself the best virtues of classical realism. In other words, the creation of socialist culture presumes creative assimilation into its own body of all that has been of value in the bourgeois epoch, and indeed in pre-capitalist epochs even before that. All inventions of this kind involve overturning as well as renovation, using the past surgically and dialectically, as resource.

By the same token, I would say that, yes, so far as the Urdu section of the progressive literary movement is concerned, the publication of *Angarey* in 1933 was a significant moment, as was the announcement of a League of Progressive Authors the same year by Ahmed Ali and Mahmuduzzafar in Allahabad; and, yes, the founding of the Progressive Writers Association soon thereafter, first in London and then inside India, was of course decisive. And, these local events were of course connected with the international context of a new policy of a broad anti-fascist united front enunciated by the Comintern. The question, however, remains (and it is much wider than Urdu as such): why is it that, once organised on its own terms, the progressive movement helped release and bring together so many creative energies across so many languages and in so many art forms? And, how is it that it gained support and approval from such personages as Premchand, Tagore and Nehru himself?

I want to offer a sweeping proposition: the Indian progressive movement, in my view, represented the condensation of a great many values that were recognisable in the culture at large – a point of confluence, so to speak, between socialist imagination, the progressive arts as they were evolving across the world, the anti-colonial movement that was its immediate politi-

cal context, the various reform movements that had preceded and lived alongside even the anti-colonial movement as such, and, behind all that, the values of the various humanisms and medieval theisms that we now know, broadly speaking, as the Bhakti and the Sufi-Sant traditions. And when I say reform movements, I mean the whole range: from the anti-feudal and anti-caste movements to the emancipation and education of women, to the reform of prose itself, in several languages. Yes, it is true that women writers such as Rashid Jehan, Ismat Chughtai, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, Khadija Mastoor and others had been inconceivable in the entire history of Urdu literature before the advent of the progressive movement. But it is also the case that they could not have emerged without the prior projects of women's education that were part of Indian modernity more generally; as well as the social emancipation that was a necessary aspect of women's mass participation in the anti-colonial movement, and a new kind of women's subjectivity that was then emerging for the first time in the domain of politics and letters. Similarly, it is best to remember that Premchand was not a product of that movement but was happy to associate himself with it because he recognised in that movement's advocacy of realism and representation of the popular classes, an extension of his own project. Nothing new comes except out of the belly of the old, even though it involves the selective destruction of parts of the old.

At the same time, I would want to argue that if the poetry of medieval theisms was the first to spread across diverse languages, regions and social strata in the India of that time, the progressive movement was the first *modern* movement to do so, creating a pan-Indian cultural, literary consciousness in which writers and artists from all corners of the country – and indeed from all linguistic, religious and regional backgrounds – could feel themselves bound by a common project. In this sense, the progressive movement was something of an analogue of the national movement itself, intersecting with it and providing something of a national cement in the artistic and cultural arena, as the national movement did in the political arena – but intersecting with the progressive side of the national movement while staying clear of its regressive and conservative side. And, like the national movement, it too served as our link to the rest of the world. What was the nature of that link for the cultural movement, specifically? With this question, I turn again to what I have called the 'international setting'.

Politically, the movement was something of a junction for three progressive movements of the period: the Bolshevik lineage of socialism, the transcontinental anti-fascist front, and anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggles across the tricontinent of Asia, Africa and Latin America – the so-called 'third world'. And, connected with these, the much broader struggle for universal emancipation, or what I simply call 'democratisation', by which I mean such things as the struggle for women's emancipation, the demand for equal rights of electoral representation, or struggles against racism and caste

oppression. The essential value in all these movements was that of secular universalism. In its global manifestations, the progressive movement was itself something of an 'International'. It was the first cultural, literary movement in history that set out to create a world literature and a global culture of shared values; the first, and so far the only, international movement in which writers and artists from all parts of the world could gather and meet each other without any consciousness of racial barriers so typical of European bourgeois culture.

Nor is it true that the international progressive movement reached its zenith in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The past half-century has seen immense growth of it. Italian neorealism was succeeded, from the 1960s onward, by an even more consummate Latin American cinema, not only in Cuba but also in Argentina, Brazil and elsewhere. What we might call the tricontinental novelists' international certainly arose in the earlier period but grew very greatly after the 1950s. Some of the earlier masters – such as Naguib Mahfouz, Asturias, Carpentier and Pramodya Toer – produced some of their masterpieces in this latter period, but they were then joined by younger figures, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Africa, Garcia Marquez in Latin America – not to speak of Abdel Rehman Moneif, possibly the most nuanced, the most patient of all Arab novelists. This is where the cutting edge of modern fiction now is.

Conclusion

I don't have the time to either take up some very significant issues, which I must perforce omit, or to go into details. So, let me conclude with some general remarks. Above all, the issue of struggle over form, content and values. I do want to stress that contributions of the proletarian cultural movement, and of the lineages descended from it, are not nearly as meagre as is sometimes supposed, especially if we are considering the two major narrative forms of the twentieth century, the novel and film. There is no region of the world that did not produce great novels in this genre, including the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, from early Soviet cinema to Italian neorealism to the British films of Ken Loach in our own time, film masterpieces in this genre abound. Moreover, there is the genre of contemporary documentary to consider, which is a global phenomenon and is much richer in India than is generally recognised. Those traditions have left indelible marks on fiction and film in India, not only in the past but even today. All this is important to reiterate clearly, because at its very core, any progressive movement worth the name is, in the widest sense, a class project.

However, there is no question that we have also inherited a dreadful legacy of ideological repression. The suppression of Soviet semiotics, represented by such great intellectuals as Voloshinov and Medvedev, and the promotion, instead, of Stalin's silly little pamphlet on linguistics, is a case in point. Here too, one could go on offering examples. Broadly speaking, one

could say that the progressive movement was at its worst when it emulated that kind of dogmatic sectarianism, and at its best when it observed the protocols of intellectual and artistic freedom.

Today, we need to own up to the whole breadth and complexity of our own tradition which dogmatism would necessarily deny. It needs to be said that Mayakovsky, the poet of the Bolshevik Revolution, was a futurist; that Andre Breton himself acknowledged that *Notebook for a Return to the Native Land* was the greatest surrealist poem ever written, and the author Aime Cesaire was, for much of his life, a communist from Martinique; that when Nazim Hikmet, the legendary communist poet, broke up the entire traditional aesthetic of Turkish poetry, and got acknowledged by one and all as the greatest Turkish poet of the twentieth century, he did so under the influence of Mayakovsky; that Bertolt Brecht, generally taken to be the greatest playwright of the twentieth century, was not only a communist but was also deeply marked by German Expressionism; that the Left has given us not only socialist realism but also magic realism, in the work of Asturias, Carpentier, Garcia Marquez and many others. On the other side were equally great poets such as Faiz who stayed loyal, by and large, to the traditional metric form of Urdu lyric poetry but transformed its content, combining romance with revolution. I could go on piling up such examples. The point I am making is that numerous key figures in the great tradition of communist writers, let alone other kinds of Marxist writers, never quite observed the Zhdanovist notions of literary production.

And then there is that great tradition of Marxist thought which goes these days under the name of 'literary theory'. Let me put it this way: when I get invited to teach fancy seminars on literary theory in fancy Western universities, who do I teach? Well, Voloshinov, Lukacs, Gramsci, Benjamin, Althusser, Raymond Williams, Eagleton – Marxists all, of various stripes, but the acknowledged masters of cultural theory over the past one hundred years – and, yes, Derrida, whose actual understanding of Marx I have publicly challenged but whose late commitment to Marx as the central figure in modern thought I greatly respect. You will notice that four of the eight names I have mentioned here were illustrious communists.

The relationship between the communist and the non-communist components of progressive thought, even within what we can recognisably call Marxism, has always been very difficult to pinpoint. Let me close, then, with one last observation about our own present. The house of the Left is a capacious house, in which the reading of Gramsci is next door to avant-garde art in the squares of Athens as thousands march against the bankers' idea of Europe. Here, magic realism is invented as the Left's answer to classical realism as the appropriate form for portraying the bizarre realities of colonial modernity. Nor is this merely a fictional form. Shades of it are there in Vallejo's great poetry, as they are in the marrying of myth and history in Galeano's reconstruction of the Latin American past, in his trilogy,

Memory of Fire; and, if I may say so, some resonances of this magic realism, not to speak of Césaire's kind of surrealism, can be found even in the later poetry of Mahmoud Darwish. This is the progressive cultural movement of our time. We don't yet know what new forms of the revolutionary aesthetic will emerge out of all this profusion, but we do know that this is a heritage of well over a century that goes on living in all kinds of nooks and corners of the world, and in which everything keeps on growing and changing. I do not at all mean to suggest that counter-revolutionary forces are not unbearably fierce, in politics as much as in art. However, this irrepressible élan, this constant renewal is what I had in mind when I came here to speak of the 'international setting' for the progressive movement, as a past that has again found its way into our present.

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The exercise of hegemony in contemporary culture and media, and the need for a counter-hegemony initiative

Sashi Kumar

Frederic Jameson, in his *Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, captures three critical historical junctures of capitalism and their respective cultural tempers: the *market capitalism* of the 1840s whose cultural logic was *realism*; the *monopoly capitalism* of the 1890s whose expression was *modernism*; and the latest and current phase of *multinational capitalism* of the 1940s which brings us to what for many of us may be the uncomfortable realm of *postmodernism*. Scholars like Vivian Sobchak have extrapolated on this schema to propose the dominant cultural instrumentality of each of these phases: the *photographic* exemplifying the mood of realism under market capitalism; the *cinematic* dominating the sensibility of modernism under monopoly capitalism; and the *electronic* pervading the contemporary, postmodern phase.

The shift from the cinematic to the electronic is subsumed in the larger transition from the *analogue* to the *digital*, which is perhaps the definitive technological change of our times and marks the essential dynamics of the information revolution which, we are told, has succeeded or superseded the industrial revolution. It is a change with the potential to subvert the hierarchic ordering of the world as we know it. The non-linear takes over from the linear; the margins move into the centre; the tyranny of the written text is challenged by visual and acoustic modes of knowledge furtherance and sense perception. To put it another way, digital technology draws us to see, hear and experience our context first-hand, rather than read about it at one remove. The new technology is weaving a sensorium around us, which approximates our natural cognitive experience.

The churning that accompanies this transition is yet to settle down, and has thrown up a mix of new perceptual and conceptual elements which seek to challenge the perspectives and values which are the given at this point. They constitute a cultural newspeak, which requires us to press the reset button and reconfigure the world.

Flatism is perhaps the more tendentious of these concepts. In the post-Nietzschean tradition, as Susan Sontag tells us, there are no heights or depths, only various kinds of surface and spectacles. Roland Barthes goes further and rubbishes the idea of depth as a repository of any concealed meaning. Jean Baudrillard's mirror metaphor holds up the idiosyncratic end of the proposition. Régis Debray calls the contemporary realm a media-sphere, which privileges 'the letter against the spirit, extension in space against comprehension, space against duration, surface against content.'

The mediological sensibility, he says, is not given to going to the bottom of things, keeping instead to 'faces, surfaces and interfaces'. The operative jargon of the new media seems to prop up this new surface-ism: after all we 'surf', rather than delve into, TV channels and the internet. The setting, thus, was ripe for Thomas Friedman to script his anecdotal adventure of flattening the world into a continuum of IT enclaves – a level playing field, as he saw it, with easy enough entrance and exit options.

Before Friedman had declared the world flat, Francis Fukuyama, with more scholarly effort, had both declared history dead and announced a new order on a clean slate. *Endism*, however, did not get as much play as flatism, and Fukuyama's *The End of History...* and *The Great Disruption* turned out to be flashes in the pan at the turn of the new century. But it was unsettling enough that he could grab intellectual and media attention, and seize the popular imagination, even if fleetingly, for propositions which were outlandishly *sui generis*.

Another set of ideas privileged by the information age is a version of the *futurism* propounded by Marinetti as far back as 1909, with its dedication to *speed*: 'We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.' Speed in the media morphs, in Todd Gitlin's gaze, into a 'torrent', which, combined with the digital parsing of sensibility, leads to the rhetoric of sound bytes and a regime of sparse attention spans. Speed introduces an aesthetics of blur to photo, video and typography, and incentivises techniques like stop framing, shutter motion and out of focus shots. The trend, for Gitlin, is reminiscent of the spirit of impressionism in painting: 'The visual style introduced by the French impressionists in the 1870s to convey the instant of motion, the instant *in* motion, recorded as if the artist's hand were in motion, has now reached typography, the representation of language itself.'

The known iconising impulse of the mass media breaks up, in this digital future, into a realm of flitting attention and fleeting reputations where, as Andy Warhol mocked, 'everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes'. Speed and futurism combine also to pace up the rate of technological obsolescence in the digitised media. The state of the art is in constant renewal and the new yields quickly to the newer in gadgetry; more up to the moment, versatile and affordable than what went just before.

The explosion of information that marks the age and the compression of this vast data through digitisation place a huge demand on the human capacity for assimilation, making it necessary to resort to what the French biologist and futurist, Joel de Rosney, calls a 'dietetics of communication'. The need to pick and choose optimally, nutritionally, from the surfeit fare on offer out there for our consumption leads to the *ratings* mind-set that rules mass media and culture. Ratings become not only the rationale for allocation of advertising budgets, but also the filter by which the popularity of cultural products are hierarchised. The 'bestseller' and 'countdown' lists in

'books and music, for instance, determine the universe of our reading and our 'heard melodies'. Work outside these short lists does not make it to our notice and, for all practical purposes, does not exist. The tyranny of the ratings, Pierre Bourdieu points out, takes a toll on our intellectual potential because it is so subservient to popular demand. It circumscribes our intellectual horizons. Well until recently the greatest accomplishments in literature, science or mathematics, he reminds us, actually went against the grain of the popular.

It is also a phase when thinkers or clairvoyants who lived in advance of their times are being posthumously rediscovered for their prescience about the information age that is suddenly upon us. The oracular aphorisms of Marshall McLuhan and Guy Debord seem to come into their own in this era. In particular, Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, written in the 1970s, bears an uncanny resemblance to what obtains today. 'In societies where modern conditions of production prevail,' wrote Debord, 'all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation.'

The process of reality being abstracted by its representation, which has dogged literature and philosophy down the ages, reaches a critical head in the information age. A.K. Ramanujan cites the plight of King Dushyanta in Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* as his memory plays tricks on him: 'like one who doubts the existence of an elephant who walks in front of him, but feels convinced by seeing footprints...'. The elephant in the room goes unrecognised; it takes its footprints, after it has left, to *re-member*, reconstruct, its presence. In the 1840s Feuerbach, in his *Essence of Christianity*, lamented that his era prefers 'the image to the thing, the copy to the original, the representation to reality, appearance to being'. The representative ritual of the eucharist, where the faithful partake of the body and the blood of Christ, acquires a larger than real dimension as it becomes a coded expression of the hierarchy of the church. In fact, Régis Debray argues that representative values are often ascribed *post facto*. The French Revolution, he observes,

invented the Enlightenment as a meaningful rallying round a cause; and the Catholic magisterium invented (one century after Jesus) the New Testament. The womb comes *after* the child, who shapes it in his own measure. The words of the Prophet are put in his mouth posthumously, all this according to the law of the precursor, the one of whom one knows afterward that he came before.

In his reflective study *Media Manifestos*, Debray arrives at a pervasive videosphere as the latest revelation in a palimpsest where a print-and-publishing-centric graphosphere and scripture-dominated logosphere are the preceding layers, in that order. Moreover, he recognizes that this sphere is as determined as the biosphere, noting that 'a good politics can no more prevent a mass medium from functioning according to its own economy

than it can prevent a severe drought'. There may be consensus about the purpose of the sciences of life – viz., to prevent illness, increase longevity, mitigate suffering and better the quality of life; the manipulation of embryos and 'in vitro' fertilisation have to do with the genetic legacy of the species. There may not be a similar agreement about the objective of the sciences of culture because they are not subject to the equivalent of a bioethics. But they should be, suggests Debray, because like the genetic legacy of the species, they are the cultural legacy of communities. (He even raises, *inter alia*, the question whether *mediology* can become to *semiology* what *ecology* is to *biosphere*.) But the new visual, sound and sign technologies are geared, instead, to 'globalise one sole political economy of videospheric consciousness which risks fostering harsh conditions for those who deviate from or disturb its status quo'. These are technologies of standardisation, rather than difference and divergence. Their product, says Debray, is of uniform value, just like power output, whether from sun, water, wind or atom, is all expressed as kilowatt-hour.

If Fordism typifies the industrial revolution at its height, its counterpart in the information revolution is Murdochism. Both systems ply standardisation and homogenisation. Ford intruded into the family, home and even the body of workers to ensure that they were physically and mentally fit to give of their best. Their sexual lives were monitored, their alcohol intake reined in by prohibition, and their morality was under constant scrutiny. As Gramsci observes in his *Prison Notebooks*:

American industrialists are concerned to maintain the continuity of the physical and muscular-nervous efficiency of the worker. It is in their interest to have a stable, skilled labour force, a permanently well adjusted complex, because the human complex (the collective worker) of an enterprise is also a machine which cannot, without considerable loss, be taken to pieces too often and renewed with single new parts.

Gramsci presciently forecasts both the surveillance state and the intrusive information age when he observes:

The attempts made by Ford with the aid of a body of inspectors to intervene in the private lives of his employees and to control how they spend their wages and how they lived is an indication of these tendencies ... these tendencies are yet private, but they could become, at a certain point, State ideology.

And they did, so much so that the citizen, even in liberal democracies, has been deconstructed, classified and archived in data-bases which serve both the profit drive of the market and the security alarmism of the State. They are, moreover, insinuated into the practice of contemporary media and pop culture. The genre of Reality TV which is a rage today is, for the most part, a showcasing, for the entertainment and vicarious participation of the general viewers of television, of the private phobias, maladjustments or mis-

matches in the relationships between members of a social group or a family. All that happens behind closed doors and would normally be considered private is displayed under the intense, unrelenting scrutiny of cameras for all the public to behold. This is a modern spectacle, a psychological thriller equivalent of the lion and the gladiator in the stadium. Pulp psychology rules the roost. The candid camera – both its jocular and sting variety – does not respect any limits of privacy. Even the internet, although purportedly a realm of anonymity, seems to end up constructing the self as a commodity by showcasing it as a cyber shop window or web page, and publicising the personal through what seems a process of compulsive social networking.

The Hollywood blockbuster *Independence Day*, of 1996, is a pointer to how technology in the garb and gizmo-hood of science fiction sublimates an implicit hegemonic intent into a noble and altruistic theme – in this case a future unification of humankind occasioned by the threat from an extra-terrestrial enemy. The plot is about an alien invasion of the earth. No less than the President of the USA, who happens to be a fighter pilot, leads the counter-offensive. The forces he commands are drawn from across all the nations of the world – a unanimous international fighting force. After much spatial blitzkrieg the world is saved from being colonised, or destroyed, or whatever it was those weird aliens set out to do. The rub comes at the end: In a state-of-the-world address to commemorate this historic victory, the President of the United States announces, as if meeting a long-nourished aspiration of peoples across the world, that henceforth the 4th of July would be celebrated not as American independence day but as world independence day. The telling-ness of the title kicks in. The film was one of the highest grossers ever until 1996 and, significantly, collected more overseas than within the US. Its success, like its theme, was emphatically international.

The hegemony operative here is what Aida Hozic, scholar of media and cultural studies, calls 'neo-Gramscian'. It is persuasive rather than coercive. The hegemon presents its 'own interests as universal and objective and thereby create(s) willing followers of its own vision'. Hozic contrasts this with the 'neo-realist' hegemony model of Pax Americana, where the dominant State calls the shots and determines the shape of inter-state relations.

Hozic's study of the curious intersection of Hollywood, Silicon Valley and the Pentagon (*Uncle Sam Goes to Siliwood: of landscapes, Spielberg and hegemony*) offers useful insights into how technology, and its fetishisation, bring these unlikely partners on the same page and subserve a hegemonic agenda. Computer companies, like Silicon Graphics in the California belt, who earlier depended on the US military establishment for its funding and R&D work, began to turn, in the 1990s, to Hollywood for work. Even by the late 1970s, Hollywood was in the process of a make-over, having stepped out of the producer-and-director-driven studio system into the more difficult turf of distributors and merchandisers. The star system and the exorbitant fees stars commanded prompted a rebel group, including George Lucas and

Steven Spielberg, to seek low budget alternatives, to substitute the star with his virtual-digital equivalent. Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977) and Spielberg's *ET* (1982) were the first expressions of this dissidence. Stars were replaced with technology and special effects. Lucas' ILM (Industrial Lights and Magic) and Spielberg's Dreamworks SKG also initiated changes in the mode of production and distribution. Spielberg attracted the best animators in Hollywood by offering them authorial rights and a percentage of the gross profits, and stood with the unions and guilds in negotiations over HDTV and digital broadcast standards.

From these independent beginnings, the digital technology-driven cinema has now become a cultural assertion of the US military-industrial complex. The technology of simulation and image generation were similar for Pentagon and Hollywood. The line between video gaming and electronic warfare blurred to such an extent that the theatre of war became a virtual theatre of the absurd for Baudrillard when he declared that the Gulf War never took place – so unilateral, simulated and hyper-real was its conduct. The Hollywood-Pentagon mix proved volatile hits for the screen, unleashing sci-fi monoliths singlehandedly redeeming humaneness from dystopias. These digital, special-effects-suffused, filmic products with their techno-icons also lent themselves better to licensing rights and branding and to a corollary retail chain of merchandising.

Aida Hozic points out that the dual-use technology regime under the Clinton administration, intended to promote a civilian-military industrial base, gave a fillip to this nexus, and further diffused the difference between entertainment, surveillance and warfare. Systems deployed in monitoring ozone data could be used in digital imagery as special effects, technology used in submarine sound detection could be used in music recording, and image generation instruments used in missile rehearsal could be adapted into a computer game software. The civilian aspect of dual-use technology by no means extended to the freewheeling public sphere as we know it; it was showcased in flight simulators or submarines or virtual reality war game installed in theme parks and malls, or such other ostensibly public space which were enclaves of private profit. This Disneyfication and its variation of game/theme parks were essentially a process of private property masquerading as public space. In the 1990s, Disney started a housing project near Orlando in the US called Celebration, which combined the nostalgic veneer of the 1940s with the latest gadgetry and luxuries. These barricaded societies function like mini-states and local merchant laws allow them their own extra levies to hire their own elaborate security. Consequently, the private security forces in the US have exceeded the official police force.

A larger digital coalition comprising academic institutions in the Silicon Valley belt, R&D establishments like the Media Lab of the MIT, and corporate sponsors including Disney, Sony, Philips, Nintendo, Lego, Sega, Nike, Microsoft, Intel and Viacom, has built on the Silicon Valley-Holly

wood-Pentagon nexus to create diverse cultural products which suit their respective dissemination modes. Of these none, of course, is more potent than the world wide web.

In a very recent joint study (*The Internet's unholy marriage to capitalism*), John Bellamy Foster and Robert McChesney take stock of the role and implications of the internet twenty years after it was made available to the public. Their finding, alarmingly, is that what once held the promise of an open public sphere is slowly being taken over by giant monopolies. In fact digital capitalism, it turns out, is more vicious than other forms of capitalism because it creates greater and more acute market concentration. Google, for instance, already controls 70 per cent of the search engine market and its share continues to grow. Microsoft, Intel, eBay, Amazon, Facebook and Cisco are the other very big players who have monopoly clout. The wifi chip-set market is a duopoly which controls 80 per cent of the market. Apple, through iTunes, has 87 per cent of the market share in digital music downloads and some 70 per cent of the MP3 player market.

The big players create the most visible and repeat-hit hot properties on the net, and erect barriers to prevent others eroding their business concentration. What they have redeemed and fenced off and developed is where consumers aggregate and transact business the most – the rest of the net seems relative *terra incognita*. Michael Wolff of *Wired* magazine shows how the concentration grows and accretes, and does not disburse or diffuse over the so-called long tail that Chris Anderson (the founder of *Wired*) enthused about: the top ten websites accounted for 31 per cent of US page views in 2001, 40 per cent in 2006 and close to 75 per cent in 2010.

This array of organised monopolistic power is pitted against the liberative power and potential of internet as a space that enables and empowers peer-to-peer activities, the open source movement, a user-driven knowledge domain like Wikipedia or browser like Mozilla Firefox, or a site with a nose for anything under wraps like Wikileaks which took the world by storm, or the viral power of social sites for mass mobilisation. This is the paradox of the internet.

This paradox of the net, Foster and McChesney interestingly point out, is akin to the Lauderdale Paradox in economics which deals with the conflict of interest between public wealth and private riches – public wealth understood as ‘all that man desires as useful or delightful for him’, and private riches as ‘all that man desires as useful or delightful for him *which exists in a degree of scarcity*’. Thus, it is scarcity that makes the difference and helps make private riches out of public wealth. Lauderdale illustrates how scarcity in formerly abundant but essential providers of life like air, water or food, would, if exchange value were attached to them, enhance individual private riches, and therefore the riches of the country calculated as the sum-total of individual riches – but this would be at the expense of the common wealth. The paradox went through many hands and filters including Ricardo and

John Stuart Mill, and Marx adapted it to argue that the contradiction between use value and exchange value, or wealth and value, was intrinsic to capitalistic production. In his *Poverty of Philosophy*, he took up Proudhon's exploration of the tension between use value and exchange value, and pointed out that Lauderdale had 'founded his system on the inverse ratio of the two kinds of value'. This became a key element of Marx's *Capital*.

Marx, further, drew on Edward Gibbon Wakefield's take on the political economy of colonisation. Wakefield found that the abundance of land in the new colonies like America, Canada and New Zealand created a shortage of wage labour because workers could set themselves up independently as subsistence farmers. The solution to the problem was to artificially inflate the price of land and encourage absentee landlordism, thus keeping land out of the reach of potential wage labour, or the mass of the people. Similarly, by creating and developing select enclaves of heavy traffic and commerce in the internet space, the digital capitalist seeks to create artificial scarcity and high exchange value for them. The use value of the vast freewheeling realm of the net has to be redeemed and reinstated.

At another level, these virtual walled gardens in cyberspace are a throw-back to the enclosure movements in England and Wales where 'open' land began to be taken over and, even without physical fencing, were held in 'severalty', except that the appropriators here are fewer in number and far more concentrated.

On the other hand, with the Seattle protests against the WTO in 1999, the net has become the agency par excellence for popular mobilisations against the big and the powerful. Its viral, virtual energy can be harnessed to topple absolutist regimes, as the Egyptian and Tunisian experiences have shown. The natural champions of such a net-scape should be those in the vanguard of the knowledge economy – the organic intellectuals, in the Gramscian sense, of this era. Not coincidentally, we find the intellectual as a potential counter-hegemon being invoked repeatedly in a succession of recent works. Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu, Said and Chomsky have all addressed the role of the intellectual in reframing society. Where they succumb to the laws of the market (and become, as Bourdieu puts it, *heteronomous*), or where they capitulate to the temptation of the media, they legitimise and sub-serve the prevailing hegemonic forces. But when they do not lend themselves to be co-opted by the market and position themselves, consciously and concertedly, against the current, they may well reverse it.

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Moment and Movement: People's Creativity in the History of Progress

Mihir Bhattacharya

If you look back on the years marked by the vital presence of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in Bengal – the 1940s and 50s in particular, though the movement started earlier and lasted longer – you may find that the mental map of culture you have prepared needs considerable revision. I have purposefully included the 50s and 60s because though the movement had ebbed by then, the moment had survived, and creativity was in many ways at its peak. Therefore what looms large in my mapping happen to be *Nabanna* of Bijan Bhattacharya, *Raktakarabi* of Shombhu Mitra, *Angar* of Utpal Dutt, *Ebang Indrajit* of Badal Sircar, the novels of Manik Bandyopadhyay, Satinath Bhaduri, Samareesh Basu, Sulekha Sanyal and Nani Bhowmik, the poetry of Bishnu Dey, Arun Mitra, Samar Sen, Subhash Mukhopadhyay and Sukanto Bhattacharya, the songs of Jyotirindra Maitra, Hemango Biswas, Binay Ray and Salil Chowdhury – and the incomparable Harindranath Chattopadhyay who composed largely in Hindi – the choreography of Shombhu Bhattacharya, the paintings and sketches of Somenath Hore, Zainul Abedin and Chitta Prasad, the photography of Sunil Janah, the graphics of Khaled Chowdhury, the cinema of Nimai Ghosh, Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen, and the like. Much of what I have listed has endured and a good many of the texts have achieved the status of modern classics. The ideological projection of my mapping is obvious; most of the texts had deep links with the organised cultural movement inspired, aided and propagated by the Communist Party of India. This movement was variously known, at the time and afterwards, as the Progressive Writers' Movement, the Marxist Cultural Movement or simply the IPTA Movement. There are some exceptions, though. *Raktakarabi* and *Ebang Indrajit* and *Pather Panchali* and a few others had no manifest links with the Party or the movement. But the organisational void does not negate strong immanent links. That is something one has to explore at some length.

But one important matter just leaps to the eye as one looks back. In a fair attempt at mapping one must also look at the texts which lie outside this listing, and many of those were more popular than the ones I have mentioned. We must remember that most of the people of the day, in particular in the countryside, were formally illiterate, and had no access to the texts which comprised high culture and mass culture. But their own culture, textually rich and geographically diverse, was pulsating with life throughout this period, largely unaffected by metropolitan movements. Looking at the

city of Kolkata and other towns, one sees a variety of cultural texts which gave satisfaction to the ranks of middle-class readers and viewers. For instance, *Pasher Bari* and *Shyamalee* ran for months and months on the professional stage, compared to the brief lives of the progressive dramatic texts; *Shap-mochan* and *Lukochuri* outgrossed *Pather Panchali* and *Meghe Dhaka Tara* by miles. It is true that marketing and established conventions often win out against innovative texts and radical ideas, but instituted values don't explain everything. There is also a radical moment in culture which is not linked to Leftwing realism and modernism. Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay and Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay were innovators; Ashapurna Devi and Bimal Mitra were middle-brow and enormously popular; Jibanananda Das, Amiya Chakravarty, Sudhindranath Datta and Buddhadeva Bose were the leading poets, experimenting with the possible shapes and meanings of poetic language; there were artists and musicians who did landmark work outside the sphere of influence of the progressive movement. There was the most important repertoire of classical music which some of the greatest artists of the age explored. Many authors and their readers were indifferent or even hostile to Leftwing politics and its cultural values. But above all, there was the looming presence of Rabindranath Tagore, who died in 1941, but whose oeuvre was both a frame of reference and an inspiration for successive generations, left, right and centre. His voice of protest against what he saw as the murderous greed of imperialism was one of the most radical in his late years, and this aspect of his work fitted in with the deep humanism of his earlier fiction and poetry. The centenary of his year of birth in 1961 created a stir which made you wonder, who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him. His work and thought were simply the biggest chunk of what the literate Bengali of the day would enjoy and cherish and meditate upon. It can be no one's position that the best or most of what happened in Bengali culture from the 30s to the 60s of the last century were directly inspired or propagated by the organised Leftist movement.

The story of the music of the day illustrates the point further. Take Salil Chowdhury, who was arguably the most versatile and innovative composer on the star-studded musical scene of the day. His initial move was in the radical direction, composing one memorable song after another for the cause of the worker and the peasant. But, at the same time, he was composing modern Bengali 'pop', bringing in a variety of styles and modes which simply took the listening community by storm. Soon afterwards he would be composing wonderful songs for Hindi films like *Madhumati* (which was scripted by Ritwik Ghatak) and captivate an all-India audience. Debabrata Biswas and Suchitra Mitra sang for the Leftist cause, but they were essentially exponents of Rabindra Sangeet, in which genre they were to become legends. Hemanta Mukhopadhyay straddled the musical spheres of progressive songs, Rabindra Sangeet, modern pop and Hindi film music. One could go on in the same vein about other cultural areas. If you look at the biographical

order of the progressive artists concerned, you will find that at some point their lives meshed with the ongoing movement of history, and that they saw the need for marching with the people and representing them in their respective spheres of work. The times were very difficult. War and Famine and Partition and Riots and Refugees marked the turbulent 40s and 50s. Resistance to exploitation and oppression grew among all classes of people. The anti-colonial struggle took on new meanings and new dimensions. The Communist movement gathered momentum as Bengal lurched from one crisis to another. Many of the best minds of the times stood up for the distressed, the downtrodden and the exploited. It does seem to be the case that the radical moment often enters culture from the movement which sees participation from large masses of the working people. But in most cases that is neither the beginning of the story nor the end.

There is, in fact, no easy passage from strongly felt unease and anger with the existing scheme of things, to solidarity with the most oppressed and/or the most vocal, and then on to a viable and workable means of constructing a cultural text adequate for the representational job. Then there is the business, much discussed in Marxism, of catching the movement of history in your text, something that Marx and Engels had discerned in Balzac and Lenin in Tolstoy. This links up with Marx's profound idea of class struggle as the principal motive force in history, and the corollary that the great artist – just as the great thinker – sees the birth of a new society in the womb of the old. The large story of determination of consciousness by the relations of production is indeed just that, a large story which demands an enormous amount of gloss. There are two determinations at work in cultural history, which is actually a history of consciousness, both at the writerly and the readerly ends. Something happens in the mind of the author to make her/him aware of things happening in history, just as something happens in the mind of the reader. But to explain just what happens when this awareness takes shape in the work of art, you have to traverse the story of the relations of material production to arrive at the means of mental and artistic production. This is what Walter Benjamin had pointed out a long time back. He had also introduced the notion of an artistic break in this area of text-making, just as Louis Althusser postulated an epistemic break in philosophy. This is the terrain of overdetermination, an idea taken over from Freud by Jacques Lacan, and used fruitfully by other Marxists in philosophy and cultural history. Lacan talks about the worker who agitates for higher wages and the one who realises that the movement for higher wages is part of the class struggle for the destruction of capitalism. This overdetermination may happen to both authors and readers. Often in history, this takes place when a movement is on, and there is passage from the movement to the moment, at which texts are constructed by authors and reconstructed by readers. The Progressive Cultural Movement is a major exemplar of this passage. But this is not the only way in which radical texts are written and read.

There is a strong sense of determination and overdetermination which has marked Marxist thought for a very long time. This position is often more normative than historical, in the sense that the movement is supposed to generate just one moment, as the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1936 vigorously legislated, declaring Socialist Realism, whatever it may be, to be the only creative principle for the committed artist. In the event, this disastrous piece of prescription generated a great deal of trash; it also caused untold misery to the conscientious artist and the theoretician. The best novelist of the Soviet era, Mikhail Bulgakov, the best poet, Vladimir Mayakovsky, the best film-maker, Sergei Eisenstein, and the best theoretician, Mikhail Bakhtin, did their job not because of the prescription but in spite of it. It is important, therefore, to propose a weaker sense of determination which allows for a measure of realism in the picture, assuming that a multiplicity of voices and positions can mark the cultural scene both at the creative and the reading end. People do a great many things, singly or together, to respond to a moment. In cultural work, there is a separate trajectory of spiritual production, involving themes and conventions and techniques, which meshes with the history of material production at particular points of time. It might be useful to look at one example from the period we are considering.

More than fifty years ago, a single film ushered in a new age in the cultural universe of India. The claim is neither immodest nor exaggerated. Nearly everyone will agree that *Pather Panchali*, released 26 August 1955, marked not only the emergence of a cinematic genius, but also the beginning of a new era in film-making. There has been a great deal of discussion on the newness of *Pather Panchali*. Internationally, its authenticity and realism were hailed; critic and ordinary viewer were equally moved by the fresh look it provided into the landscape of ordinary lives in the Indian countryside. Its lyrical quality, harder to define, was equally valued. People noted the relaxed but complex rhythm of the narrative, the spatial configuration of man-nature relationship, the deep sympathy for the underdog, the unvarnished portrayal of meanness as well as joys of living, the subtle historical meta-narrative, the deep insight into the arc of desire and fear which marks the child's entry into the world. International recognition is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for judging a film's worth, but it does provide an index to thresholds and breaks. Apart from friendly gestures from the Soviet Union and parts of the Communist camp consequent upon independent India's leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, hardly any notice was taken of Indian cinema at the time. It was a curiosity because it was one of the largest entertainment industries in the world, but in terms of the world scene, it was one of those national cinemas which dotted the landscape and hardly mattered. This was the view from Hollywood, which was of no value or consequence because Indian cinema was financially as well as culturally autonomous; but what did matter was the studied indifference of the film-making and film-reading avant-garde, in

the West as well as elsewhere, towards what was on offer from the melodramatic repertoire of Indian cinema. *Pather Panchali* made the international fraternity of cinema to sit up and take notice. The pathetic gloating which is in evidence in the globalised middle class of today whenever recognition comes from the metropolis was much less in evidence in the newly emerging nation, just into its eighth year of independence. There was a sense that something of a break had taken place in the humdrum round of 'mythologicals' and 'socials', and that one could share one's joy and pride with the rest of the world.

The world was generous in its praise: Cannes, Edinburgh, Manila and the Vatican in 1956; San Francisco and Berlin in 1957; the roll of honour continued. But the most important thing about the reception of *Pather Panchali* was the response of Bengal and, later on, the rest of India. The President's Award for the best feature film of 1955 merely recognised what the film-going public had already decided for itself in the very first week after release. Those who lived through the momentous months from August 1955 onwards will remember the sense of excitement and fulfilment which the film generated. There were rounds of reception and open seminar and discussion-group sessions; reviews, interviews, newspaper articles and leaders appeared all over the place. It became a talking point at university tea-rooms and coffee houses. Much prestige attached to those who had gone and seen *Pather Panchali* at its first run. Mind you, one is talking probably of a small fragment of the articulate middle class, primarily based in the huge sprawling city of Kolkata, perhaps predominantly Hindu, but this fragment contained the intellectually active avant-garde who took the lead in expressing the wonder and pleasure of viewing the film. And the viewing was not confined to the elite. Large numbers of ordinary people went to see the film and were moved by it. In a sense, the international elite and the Bengali common viewer had congruous as well as differing reasons for admiring *Pather Panchali*. The realism, the humanism, the lyricism appealed to everyone. But the Indian, particularly the Bengali, viewer had special reasons for feeling that the film addressed some of the deepest concerns and values of one's existence. People were living in very difficult times in the partitioned Bengal of the 1950s. Poverty, joblessness, scarcity, disease, hunger, injustice and oppression stalked this part of the country in particular. Ray had not intended to mirror the contemporary in the evocation of the not-so-lost historical past. But he sensed the turmoil of the times in the story of a small family in a small village around the turn of the century. He was proposing that it was important to look at the conditions for the production of anxiety and despair, pleasure and hope, solidarity and division. He placed the ordinary man and woman at the centre of his narrative and brought children to the fore; the girl-child fulfils her destiny by dying, but the boy survives to carry on the grim struggle with the mother by his side. The contemporary audience had a great deal to find in this film; and though one or two of the later films

failed initially, the Bengali viewer can be said to have stood by their foremost artist in the second half of the century.

The artistic and technical conditions for the production of *Pather Panchali*, stark at one end and startling on the other, have been documented with great good humour by Ray himself. The camera of Subrata Mitra and the sets of Bansi Chandragupta, mavericks of enormous innovative talent, came up with technical solutions to the rigorous demands of Ray's imagination. He was charting an artistic path untrodden by any Indian film-maker so far. Lighting up an old, broken-down house, for instance, or getting complete novices to face the camera, needed formidable ingenuity and aplomb. Ray's job was to think up ways of forging a new consensus on the protocols of realism with his projected audience. He had no hero or heroine or villain or fighting or melodrama or clowning or sexy dances or lilting songs or lavish sets on offer. Therefore he had to persuade the viewer to adjust her sights and her narrative desire to the new representational regime. This was done by offering a richness of detail – both natural and social – which the film-goer had seldom seen represented. Ray was teaching us how to discover our own world which we had lost to the conventions of studio melodrama. A kind of defamiliarisation was taking place in the process of watching the film-text in 1955: the available conventions of film-making had been abandoned, and something rich and strange had taken their place. This meant that the older ways of seeing had to be jettisoned. Ray, in fact, prepared the Bengali audience to be ready for the new Indian cinema. The history of subsequent decades will bear this out.

The international context of this new artistic break is pretty well known; Ray himself repeatedly acknowledges his debt to modern masters like Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Renoir, De Sica, Ford, Orson Welles and others. He was generous, perhaps too generous, to old Hollywood, because most of his work flatly contradicted the standard Hollywood procedures. It is also recognised that Ray's cinema, like Mrinal Sen's and Ritwik Ghatak's, is a major contribution to cultural modernity in India. The cinema comes of age in their hands. What is not very often kept in mind is the trajectory of cultural modernity in Bengal, which describes a rather separate curve from most of the rest of India. One even sees fairly ludicrous attempts to link the State-convened modernisation of the Nehruvian era to the cultural goals of modern Bengal. In fact, Ray was engaged in bringing cinema in line with the revolutionary developments in Bengali culture from the nineteenth century onwards. Consider the single example of Ray's own family. The grandfather came to settle in Kolkata and immediately started several modern enterprises in education and culture: printing, publishing, children's literature, scientific and technical work, photography, women's education, social and religious reform. The father was a genius who extended the possibilities of children's literature in radically new directions. The elite – largely the educated middle class and predominantly Hindu – were extremely innovative

in these areas, and what happened was not because of British rule but in spite of it. The first modern novel, *Durgeshnandini* of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, was published in 1865 and became an immediate trend-setter. The lyric poetry of Tagore – as also his fiction, drama, music and painting – set the standards of cultural modernity in the twentieth century. The best modern novelist, Manik Bandyopadhyay, and the best modern poet, Jibanananda Das, had lived till the 50s. The political turmoil of the freedom movement, itself an index to modernity, had generated vigorous cultural activities, and this was true of the later Leftist movements which emerged out of the armed freedom struggles, and workers' and peasants' movements. It is not possible to separate Ray and *Pather Panchali* from this history. He was, in fact, the latest pioneer in a prolonged struggle to achieve an Indian version of modernity. That he had chosen the tenth muse is a bit of luck for the world of cinema.

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Two Brothers, Bhisham and Balraj Sahni: Some Experiences in the IPTA

Kalpana Sahni

I have been told that in my early childhood I spent more time lying on a *charpai* behind the stage than in a regular bed, and that anybody who passed by covered me with whatever was at hand – shawls, sweaters, sheets, curtains... I lay buried under a mountain of clothes till the end of the performance, thanks to my well-wishers – actors, singers and stage-hands. There were times when I woke up and walked on to the stage, and the actors, unflustered, improvised a dialogue and I would effortlessly become part of the play that was being staged by the IPTA. My father, Bhisham Sahni, was the director, frequently enacting one or more roles. Other artistes included my mother, uncle, aunts and cousins, in short, our family – a happy boisterous one with hardly any possessions or even a roof above their heads, penniless refugees in a divided land.

The first great impact of traditional theatre, referred to many times in Bhishamji's writings, was the post-Bengal famine period in 1944.

It was in those days that a small group of stage actors and actresses came from Calcutta and gave a performance in a cantonment hall in Rawalpindi. They had been giving performances in different towns earlier. I also went to see it. It was very different from all that I had been seeing earlier.

That was my first introduction to the Indian People's Theatre Association, popularly known as IPTA.

It was a street play, even though it had been performed on the stage of a cinema hall. It told the story of the Bengal sufferers; the performance was charged with intense emotion. There were no properties worth the name on the stage, bare cot on one side, a few tattered clothes hanging, a few pots and pans. It was virtually a bare stage.

An old man, holding a dimly lighted hurricane lamp entered from one side, exclaiming: 'Will you care to listen to what is happening in Bengal?'

Then followed a short play dealing with the plight of a family during the famine days.

I do not remember the plot. But I sat glued to my seat watching the performance, which lasted, I think, for an hour or so. When the play ended, the actors and actresses stepped down from the stage with their *jholies* spread out to collect donations for the Bengal sufferers and went from one row of seats to the others. I remember, when one of them came close to where I sat,

a young lady sitting in the row ahead of mine took off her gold ear-rings and put them in the actor's *jholi*.

It was a very moving experience, a strange, disturbing experience. What I had seen had little to do with the kind of drama with which I had been familiar earlier. That sense of detachment with which you as a spectator watch a play on the stage had given place to a sense of intense involvement.

This particular theatre group, led by Benoy Roy, formed the nucleus of the Bombay IPTA shortly afterwards. It was at this time that Bhishamji was sent to Bombay by his worried parents on one of his numerous 'semi-spy missions', as he termed them, to enquire about the fate of his elder brother and to persuade him to return home. Known to 'take leaps into the unknown', his brother had earlier walked out of his father's lucrative business. Subsequently he had briefly run a newspaper in Lahore, spent two years teaching in Santiniketan, and one year at Gandhiji's Sevagram in Wardha. Then there was a chance encounter and a job offer that made him impetuously pack his bags and leave for London to join the BBC. Four years later, on his return, his continuing restlessness drove him to Bombay on promises made by an old college friend, Chetan Anand. Two film roles were offered – one for his wife Damayanti and one for him, in a film adaptation of Maxim Gorky's *Lower Depths*. This time my grandparents were truly horrified at the prospect of their son joining this dubious profession of film actors.

On his arrival at Bombay railway station, my father – in pursuit of his mission – was received by Damayanti or Dammoji, as she was known. To all his questions regarding the prospective film, Dammoji just smiled in response and told him that he would soon see for himself. Instead of a film set, Bhishamji was taken to a modest-looking house on Pali Hill where three families were living (Chetan and Uma Anand, Dev Anand and Goldie Anand; Hamid and Azra Butt along with her two sisters; and Balraj-ji and Dammoji and their two tiny children) – ten adults and two children. Rehearsals were on full swing in the drawing room for a play called *Zubeida* and Chetan Anand was playing the hero.

Bhishamji was completely nonplussed, 'When I arrived, a discussion was going on as to how a horse could be brought on stage.'²

The IPTA had a profound and lasting effect on my family. I will attempt here to shed some light on the lives of the two brothers, primarily through their own writings and experiences.

Balraj was the first son born after five daughters. He was fair and constantly teased his younger brother (who was dark and sickly) that he had been lifted from a garbage heap. One was reckless and adventurous, the other seemingly quiet and reticent; one an extrovert, the other an introvert. Both doted on each other. Their favourite pastime was staging plays for the family. Bhishamji recalls his first acting experience:

My earliest association with theatre dates back to remote childhood, when my elder brother, senior to me only by two years, took it into his head to perform a play. The theme of the play centred round Rana Pratap. ... I was assigned the non-speaking role of Chetak, Rana Pratap's famous horse, and my performance included nodding my head now and then.³

Nobody in our austere Arya Samaj household could at the time have foreseen the future destinies of the two brothers. Their father was, of course, certain that one day they would join him in running his successful merchant business.

By the time Balraj-ji and his wife returned to Bombay in 1944 from war-torn London, both had become committed Marxists. Determined to pursue acting as a career, Balraj-ji arrived in the city only to discover that Chetan Anand had still not succeeded in raising money for his film. Gaining a foothold in films for him was extremely difficult as he ran endlessly from one prospect to another. 'One day,' Balraj-ji writes,

I happened to read in a newspaper an advertisement announcing a play, which the 'People's Theatre' was going to put on. I knew there was a People's Theatre in China; was there one in India too? I was curious to know, so I asked Chetan. But I drew a blank. That evening I ran into V.P. Sathe, the well-known journalist. ... When I asked him if he knew anything about a People's Theatre in Bombay, he answered, 'You bet I do. I am one of its members. In fact, I am right now on my way to attend its meeting, where Khwaja Ahmed Abbas is going to read his play. Come along ...

At my insistence, Chetan too accompanied us. Sathe took us to the Deodhar School of Music, which occupied part of a floor of a building in a lane off Opera House.⁴

After the play reading, where about twenty young girls and boys were present, Abbas, then only a casual acquaintance, dropped a bombshell. He announced that the play, *Zubeida*, would be directed by Balraj Sahni.

All I could do was to stare at him in utter disbelief. It would, however, have been foolish on my part to turn down the offer since it offered me something which could keep me occupied. I had had enough of sitting idle at home!

Thus it was that life opened up for me a new vista, which has left a permanent imprint on my personality. Even today I take pride in calling myself an IPTA man.⁵

Bhishamji's arrival in Bombay coincided with the final rehearsals of *Zubeida* and he too was given a minor acting role. *Zubeida* proved to be a great success and marked the beginning of Balraj-ji's long association with K.A. Abbas who was one of the founding members of IPTA. As for my father's 'semi-spy mission' to Bombay, he recounts the outcome: 'Needless to say that, instead of advising and persuading my brother to return home, I got

converted myself and came back to Rawalpindi with the script of *Zubeida* in my pocket.⁶

Balraj-ji recounts his subsequent involvement with the IPTA:

... following the success of *Zubeida* my colleagues in the IPTA came to agree with everything that I proposed to do. I insisted that different groups for different languages be founded – something which IPTA had already accepted in principle. It now set about giving the proposal a practical shape. Before long, we had dramatic groups performing in Marathi, Gujarati, English and even in Telugu. Besides these various groups, IPTA also had an all-India dance troupe. After the break-up of Uday Shankar's troupe, almost all its leading artistes had joined us. They were such renowned artistes as Ravi Shankar, Sachin Shankar, Shanti Bardhan, Abani Das Gupta, Prem Dhavan, Dina Gandhi, Gul Bardhan, Bina Rai and Ali Akbar Khan.

Our dramatic troupes too enjoyed the patronage of such eminent litterateurs and artistes as Mama Warerkar, Chandravadan Mehta, Gunwantrai Acharya, Prithviraj Kapoor and Durga Khote. These people were no mere advisers, but wrote plays for us or acted in them. ...

The IPTA movement ... had spread all over India and leading writers and artistes from different states were now coming in its fold. A unique bond of friendship and love was being forged between artistes from different parts of India. The artistes of today's generation would, I think, scarcely believe that such a thing was possible.⁷

Bhishamji observed a distinct transformation in his brother:

Balraj was like a man possessed. He had no thought for anything except the IPTA and its activities. A change had come over Balraj. Earlier he had only emotionally been involved with the national struggle, now he was an active participant in it, as a theatre artist. That line of demarcation between art and politics which he had drawn earlier had all but disappeared and he had begun to believe that the two activities – artistic and political – were to be fused together. IPTA was a dramatic movement of social commitment. It aimed to present a graphic, vivid picture of social reality, not from the angle of a detached observer but of a participant. Art is created not in a spirit of neutrality but of a deep and passionate involvement and that was the reason why the IPTA made a profound impact on the development of the theatre in India during the forties. Those of us who have witnessed or participated in the activities of the IPTA cannot but remember it with a sense of elation. Its branches were shooting up in every linguistic region. In Bengali, they would stage the *Jatras* on contemporary themes, or shadow plays, or plays in the best traditions of Bengali theatre; dance and song ensembles grew up in many states; the Maharashtra branch would stage *Pawaras* while the U.P. artists would present *Nautankis*. The movement was reviving folk forms as also innovating new forms. Besides, Western plays would be adapted and staged as for

instance, Gogol's *Inspector General*, J.B. Priestley's *They Came to a City* and *Inspector Calls* and many others. The IPTA was unique in having brought the artist closer to social reality as also inspired him to participate in the struggle on the side of progressive forces. Dramatic activity was no longer confined to the elite or the professional theatre. The IPTA stage gave Balraj that sense of involvement and participation which he had not had earlier. No wonder he took to it as fish takes to water.⁸

P.C. Joshi, General Secretary of the Communist Party at the time, elaborates on Balraj-ji's method of work with fellow-artists:

The *Tamasha* was the traditional folk drama of Maharashtra. Its peerless composer and performer was Anna Bhau Sathe, of Harijan origin and semi-literate. Balraj discovered him, made friends with him and became his guide, and made him take the help of others as and when necessary. This was his method of work, which made it a collective effort instead of a one-man show as is the usual trait with middle-class artists going to the people. They only use the people and the folk artists for self-expression, experimentation and their own ends.

Balraj's way was totally different. He talked to Anna Bhau in scientific terms about working-class life, and did not leave him to blind experience alone. He talked to him about the important national and international events which made good themes for the *Tamasha*. Anna Bhau lapped up all that Balraj said, discussed it with other Maharashtrian comrades, intellectuals and workers alike, and with his head full of new ideas, began producing *Tamasha* after *Tamasha*. He already had his own group of performers and Balraj attended their meetings, helped them organise their rehearsals, and inoffensively got them to learn modern stage craft and improved their presentation without damaging the folk spirit and the tradition of the *Tamasha*. This early training under Balraj helped Anna Bhau, and his troupe expanded and drew within its fold the best of the rising working-class talent. ... Perhaps the best single discovery of Balraj was Amar Sheikh with his unforgettable, powerful voice. He was already a folk singer well-known in his locality. Balraj was struck by his rich voice and helped him to cultivate it.⁹

Other insightful glimpses of the IPTA are to be found in Bhishamji's memoirs:

An interesting feature of the activities of the IPTA was that, after the rehearsals in Deodhar Hall in Grant Road area, the IPTA enthusiasts would board the suburban train on their way home to different localities, and sing these songs in chorus inside the compartments. Sometimes a crowd of passengers would gather round them and the whole compartment would resound with these patriotic, progressive songs.¹⁰

A significant event in the cultural movement was the film, *Dharti ke Lal*

(1946), an IPTA production, written and directed by K.A. Abbas. Its cast of actors included Shombhu Mitra, Tripti Bhaduri, Damayanti Sahni, Balraj Sahni, Anwar Mirza, Hamid Butt and Zohra Sehgal. Ravi Shankar was the music composer. 'In the days of World War II,' Balraj-ji writes, 'the British Government would also sometimes grant well-known artistes and companies licenses to make films.'¹¹

Thanks to the enterprising spirit of Abbas and Sathe, IPTA too got a license as a result of which we could produce *Dharti ke Lal*. It was the first major experience for me in my film career. The entire film was planned by Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, all by himself. He was both its writer and its director. He was assisted by three men who hailed from different parts of India – Shombhu Mitra from Bengal, Vasant Gupte from Maharashtra and I from Bombay. The film was based on three books which in those days had been acclaimed as classics. All three had the Bengal famine as their central theme. They were the two plays by Bijen Bhattacharya *Zabaan bandi* and *Navannu*, and Krishan Chander's lyrical novel *Arinadata*. ...

... It was IPTA that had planned the film *Dharti ke Lal* and inevitably the Bengali group became the most powerful group in IPTA. Who indeed could be better acquainted than they with the hardships the famine-stricken people of Bengal had to endure? Our difficulty, however, was that none of them could speak Hindi with even reasonable fluency; consequently they could not convey to their colleagues what they wanted to say. The discussions and the rehearsals preceding the actual shooting often dragged on endlessly. ... Abbas would sometimes walk out of the studio in a huff and we would run after him to bring him back! Or it was the other way round. Naturally all these moods and tantrums of ours raised the cost of the shooting. I, of course, had no knowledge then of this aspect of film-making, nor did I care for it, since I was only an assistant director! If our film did not flounder, it was solely because both the IPTA and the Communist Party saw to it that no member of the unit transgressed the limits of propriety. ...

We used to shoot at Shree Sound Studios. Rajnikant Pande, its owner, was a master cameraman and his brother Chandrakant Pande, the sound recordist, had no peer in his profession. No film distributor was prepared to consider a film worth buying unless it was shot at Shree Sound Studios and Chandrakant Pande had done its recording. ... It was Abbas who had managed to get such a well known studio to let a poor organization like IPTA shoot its film there. No one else could have done that. ...

Our Bengali colleagues were staying with Abbas in his two-room flat. Many a time we too would descend on him for an overnight stay. ... Once we too had not slept a wink for four days and four nights in a row. ...¹²

At the instance of the Communist Party and the various trade unions and peasants' organizations, many workers and farm hands and their women-folk and children, used to play bit roles in our film, gratis. Indeed hundreds

of them had participated in that scene, depicting the trek to the city of impoverished, starving villagers. On the day of the shooting, as early as 4 in the morning, the Bengali girls from IPTA had begun teaching the women participants, who came from a Maharashtra village, the ritual of wearing a saree in the Bengali style, and for four full days the villagers of Kapadne had let the members of the *Dharti ke Lal* unit romp through their farms. Moreover, they treated us as their honoured guests and gave us food and shelter.¹³

Balraj-ji soon became the General Secretary of the Bombay IPTA branch. Bhishamji, in the meantime, juggled his time in Rawalpindi between college teaching, assisting his father in his business, directing plays, and working as the Secretary of the Rawalpindi Town Congress Committee (having joined the Congress in 1943) in Punjab's riot-torn areas and the refugee camps. He also somehow managed to find time to regularly visit Bombay where he had joined the Hindustani Drama Group of IPTA. He explains the reasons for participating in IPTA:

I was totally involved in IPTA activities. Perhaps this 'junoon' or passion of mine was because IPTA's significance affected me greatly at the time. I had witnessed the Rawalpindi riots. I had also witnessed the burning towns in Punjab. I had sat watching from the train, which had been stopped at Lahore for four hours, the leaping flames arising from the direction of Shahhalami. That is the reason why, working in IPTA, I felt a sense of fulfilment of doing some meaningful work rather than engaging in it for amusement.¹⁴

IPTA staged plays everywhere: in by-lanes, on the beach, atop a truck and on the streets. During the communal riots IPTA's slogan was 'Every Muslim saves his Hindu neighbours. Every Hindu saves his Muslim neighbours.' A makeshift stage erected on a hired truck enabled the group to quickly move from one locality to another in order to stage multiple performances in a day.

Bhishamji recounts his Bombay IPTA experiences in periods of communal tension:

At the time of the communal riots, the IPTA squads went and staged shows on communal harmony in areas where communal tension prevailed. On the eve of Partition and after Partition, in the riot-torn areas of Bombay and numerous other cities and towns, such plays as Abbas' *Main Kaun Hun?* were staged dozens of times, sometimes at great risk. The singing squads sang songs on topical issues written and composed by Prem Dhavan, Shankar Shailendra, Amar Sheikh, Anna Bhau Sathe, Gawankar and others.¹⁵

I also remember quite a few occasions when, during the days of communal tension, IPTA squads would be performing anti-communal plays in riot-prone areas and stones would be hurled at them from dark street corners.¹⁶

The Hindustani Drama Group, of which I soon became an active mem-

ber, would stage plays in different localities of Bombay, sometimes on an improvised stage, at others, in the street itself.¹⁷

Amongst the numerous plays Bhishamji directed were Ismat Chughtai's *Dhani Bankein* (Green Bangles) and *The Ghost Train* or *Bhoot Gaadi*, which was turned from an anti-communist play into an anti-communal one by Abbas for the Ahmedabad IPTA Conference. The cast included my mother Sheilaji, Prem Dhavan and his wife Noor, Balraj-ji, and Shaukat Azmi, recently married to Kaifi Azmi. This, incidentally, was Shaukat Azmi's first acting role. It was during one of the rehearsals for this play that Balraj-ji and Kaifi Azmi nearly came to blows. The story goes that Balraj-ji arrived at the rehearsal and, unaware that Shaukatji was pregnant, asked her to be rather energetic by making her run around the stage. Kaifi finally lost his cool and asked him what business he had to meddle when Bhisham was directing the play.

Amongst my father's papers, I came across a pocket-size diary of 1948 in which he had jotted down, with other casual items of expenditure and addresses, a list of items for an IPTA performance. Included in it are the first lines of some of the songs. From some dormant area of my forgotten memories, suddenly, as I glanced at the diary, the melodies and words came rushing back. These were the songs I grew up on, songs which were lustily sung at the drop of a hat in our home. Apart from these songs the repertoire included songs in Telugu, Kashmiri and Bengali; Gujarati and Hindi skits. Another entry in the diary mentions rehearsals of an English play and *Pagri*.

The IPTA repertoire included every part of India, and an amalgamation of folk music and regional language skits that was reflected in the composition of the group consisting of selfless, dedicated IPTA workers from varied backgrounds. There was Dasrath, an expert *dholak* player, who earlier worked as a Calcutta tram worker, and Prem Dhavan, the legendary singer, song writer and composer, who was the son of a jailor and had been inspired by the Ghadar Babas serving a life sentence.

In his autobiography, *Aaj ke Ateet*, Bhishamji recounts how, on one occasion, he and Prem Dhavan crashed out on the stage after a late night show in Bombay's Andheri district.

We were responsible for loading all the stage-props on to a bullock-cart and taking them to the IPTA Headquarters at Deodhar Hall on Grant Road. The next morning, we climbed on top of the props after loading them on to a bullock cart, and set off at 10 a.m., reaching the Headquarters at 4 p.m.¹⁸

All through their eight-hour journey through roads and by-lanes, Prem Dhavan and my father lustily sang the IPTA songs. The zeal and the zest was all that mattered in those days for these penniless artistes. The family breadwinner was Dammoji, who joined the newly set up Prithvi Theatre for a monthly salary of Rs 400. Her natural talent for acting was noticed during

her performance in the play *Deewar*. Indeed, almost overnight she became a much sought-after film actress. She donated her pay cheque from her first film to the Party. Occasionally, a dubbing job for a film would come along and my parents would make a few extra rupees to pool into the meagre, shared resources.

My father, speaking at the National Drama Festival in Delhi, recalled with nostalgia:

The most stimulating and memorable period of my association with the theatre was when I was involved with the activities of the IPTA, and that was many many years ago. The IPTA had given a new orientation to dramatic activity. It had left the theatre hall and gone into the street to address itself to every passer-by who happened to be walking along in the street. It had adopted a language spoken and understood by the man in the street, and it told a story with which the man in the street was deeply concerned. It was simple, direct, socially involved dramatic activity with the avowed aim of serving a social purpose. ... It was the dedicated involvement of the IPTA players in social causes that was the most inspiring and luminous part of their activity. It was a theatre movement with a difference. A product of stormy times in our country, it virtually provided a new genre to our performing arts. Drawing heavily on the folk and traditional art forms, it dealt with contemporary issues with a forward-looking innovative mind. The IPTA stage provided a rare spectacle of different folk forms and adaptations from different parts of India, their very presence on one stage, particularly at the time of all-India conferences, a fascinating spectacle of our country's multi-lingual, multi-cultural polity. It had forged a stage which truly reflected the composite culture of our country.¹⁹

Balraj-ji too was introspective and attempted to understand the reasons for IPTA's success:

What was it that gave the IPTA movement such phenomenal popularity in so short a time? Surely, no movement of such a magnitude can strike root, all by itself.

The answer ... is that the IPTA flourished because in those days, the Communist Party was following the right policy, a policy that evoked an immediate response from the people. I remember how people in the auditorium would stand up spontaneously as soon as someone had started singing a Prem Dhavan song. They would listen to it with rapt attention and a solemn expression on their faces. The party's policy was genuinely nationalistic in its outlook, while at the same time being in tune with true internationalism. Every problem of the day was placed before the people in clear-cut terms by the party.²⁰

It was a deep commitment to a shared goal accompanied by a rare degree of open democratic functioning within the IPTA which drew a wide spec-

trium of people to it. Inevitably, this led to unsurpassed creativity. Today, there are some who claim that almost all the significant and brilliant artistes that emerged in post-war India came from the ranks of the IPTA of those years. The credit for this remarkable achievement would naturally go to P.C. Joshi, who provided the most extraordinary inspiration to the IPTA movement during its formative years.

P.C. Joshi was, for Bhishamji, 'the inspiring force behind the IPTA'. He recalls meeting him for the first time after the *Zubeida* performance in Bombay:

It was in those hectic days that I met Shri P.C. Joshi for the first time. I was taken by surprise when my brother introduced me to him. I saw before me a carelessly dressed person, his shorts coming down to his knees, a pair of old chappals on his feet; chewing tobacco. Surely, I said to myself, this could not be P.C. Joshi, whose name was on everyone's lips. But when he put his hand on my shoulder with a loving glint in his eyes and a radiant smile on his lips, my doubts were dispelled.²¹

For us children, P.C. Joshi was PC-ji. Within a week of my birth in Sri-nagar, Balraj-ji sent a telegram from Bombay: 'If it is a girl, name her Kalpana.' And so, without a second thought, I was named after PC-ji's heroic wife. PC-ji was exceptional. Humble, loving, simple and yet clear in his vision and ideas, he had an uncanny ability to enthuse, pick out the inherent talent in a person and give it an impetus. He had a remarkable capacity to attract people from a wide spectrum and to motivate them to join in a common cause. This was a unique quality that inspired many of his admirers.

Balraj-ji recounts his first encounter with him,

The party's central office was in Raj Bhavan, a building on Sandhurst Road. The warmth and the friendliness of the place touched one's heart. The pleasure one derived from eating in the party's lunch-room was like the one the Sikhs get from eating in their 'Guru ka Langar'. It was in Raj Bhavan that I first met P.C. Joshi and before long our acquaintance blossomed into a beautiful friendship which has lasted to this day. An ardent revolutionary that he was, P.C. loved every facet of life intensely. He would devote every moment of his life to widening the boundaries of his knowledge. He did not believe that art should merely be a handmaid to political leaders. He himself took an intelligent interest in art. Time and again, his advice and guidance proved of great help to us in the IPTA. He was accessible to all and even to a lowly clerk he was a kind friend, guide and philosopher. He exuded a strange kind of magnetism and none who had met him once could ever forget him. No wonder then, P.C.'s friends were scattered all over the country. It is ages now since our two families have been on the friendliest of terms. In fact, it was P.C.'s dynamic personality that had made both me and Dammo become members of the Communist Party.²²

The Play *Jaadoo ki Kursee*

Soon there were major shifts in the Party line and the IPTA, best described by PC-ji:

The Central Troupe of the I.P.T.A. was just coming into its own not only politically, professionally and organizationally, but was also earning a reputation for attempting something unique and distinctive in our cultural life. It is then, during the end of 1947, that a sectarian offensive inspired by the incorrigibly Left comrade Ranadive was put into operation through the good-hearted but narrow-minded treasurer Ghate. As the treasurer, he complained that too much of the central funds were being wasted in cultural work by subsidising the IPTA troupe while its earnings were nominal.

This non-stop campaign unfortunately led to the closure of the Andheri centre and the disbandment of the IPTA troupe during mid-1947. It was the first glimpse of what Left sectarianism was going to cost the party soon enough when comrade Ranadive became the party leader after the Second Congress of the party, early in 1948. Sectarianism with its narrowness is the enemy of culture. We experienced it long before Mao's cultural revolution! ²³

My cousin Harshi Kashyap (now Anand) claims that she had to swallow a large amount of Communist Party secret dossiers. The Party archives of 1948 could well be in her stomach! This fourteen-year-old, diehard 'communist' Harshi, an active member of the Bombay IPTA singing squad, had left her studies, certain that the revolution was around the corner. Around 1948, she served as the courier for the underground comrades of the now banned Communist Party. Under strict instructions from Balraj-ji, she was to swallow the messages in the event of danger, which seemed to have loomed rather frequently.

In the aftermath of Partition, included amongst the thousands of rudderless refugees in Bombay were my grandparents, parents and countless other relatives. Dammoji had tragically died suddenly in 1947, at the age of 28, and Balraj-ji was once again knocking at the doors of AIR and the Films Division.

Recalling those times, Balraj-ji writes:

To add to my troubles, IPTA started floundering following the 1948 Congress of the Communist Party. IPTA had been a veritable haven for me. ... The Ranadive line of the Communist Party now laid down that Jawaharlal Nehru had become a stooge of the Anglo-American imperialists. The Party had branded the entire bourgeoisie as enemies of the working classes and the country. Instead of accepting the realities of India's independence and rallying to the Congress government, it had called upon its followers to rise in rebellion against the overnment. It launched a campaign to rid its ranks, as well as its front organisations of every bourgeois trace. Those who were till yesterday respected persons became traitors overnight. Several members

were expelled from the party on one pretext or another, some left the party when faced with government reprisals, yet others quit without formally announcing their decision to do so. Amongst the latter were eminent colleagues like Khwaja Ahmed Abbas.

I too could not make head or tail of the new party line. However ... it had become an inseparable part of my life. Moreover, it was the training I had received in the party that had taught me to give rational thinking precedence over mere revolutionary élan. But now, I reversed my order of priorities and, carried away by enthusiasm, wrote a play, *Jadoo ki Kursi*. Although it was published in my name, it was, in fact, a joint effort with Rama Rao, who was then the General Secretary of IPTA, collaborating with me. The play devastatingly lampooned Jawaharlal Nehru and his policies. I myself had played the lead role in that play, which was directed by Mohan Sahgal. The play succeeded beyond our expectations. The audience used to roar with laughter. Krishen Chander had seen it eleven times.

People who have seen it ask me even today for its manuscript. I cannot, however, bring myself to tell them how ashamed I am of that faux pas of mine! I feel mortified at the thought that an insignificant person like me should have had the cheek to ridicule a great savant like Nehru! Years ago I had burnt all the copies of that unfortunate play, and all I remember now is its bare outline.²⁴

Word spread fast about Balraj ji's anti-government work. Film producers backtracked on their promises of film roles. In early 1949 Balraj-ji participated in a Communist Party-led demonstration, and was promptly arrested and imprisoned.

A few months prior to Balraj-ji's arrest, my father, determined to support his family, had left Bombay for Ambala after accepting a job offer as a lecturer. For the next few years my father taught, or rather made many attempts to teach, for he also immersed himself in organizing the Punjab College Teachers' Union (becoming its General Secretary) and initiating IPTA activities. His Party affiliation, Union and IPTA work meant that he was regularly thrown out of his various jobs. In addition, no landlord was willing to rent out a room to him. It was left to my mother to find a temporary job in the Jullunder AIR. Father's 'beat', as he called it, in search of employment, his Union and IPTA work extended across the length and breadth of the Punjab: Jullunder, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Ambala. Performances of plays, skits and songs were staged for the 1948 and 1949 IPTA Conferences in Ahmedabad and Allahabad. In between these activities, he was running to get government permissions to stage the infamous play, *Jaadoo ki Kursi*.

Despite all odds, Bhishamji did eventually stage the play in Simla. The account of events thereafter became one of those often retold gems in our family circle. My maternal grandfather, a police officer who was posted in Simla in 1949, received orders to arrest Bhishamji who was planning to stage

an 'anti-national' play at the Kalabari Hall. Fortunately, my grandfather's sense of family loyalty overcame his sense of duty and he informed my father of his imminent arrest. Undeterred, Bhishamji went ahead and put up two hugely successful shows of the play. For the third show my father, sensitive to some of the actors' fears of impending arrest, decided to do away with the Congress cap and delete one couplet from a song. These omissions in no way changed the general anti-Congress mood of the production. The play was staged and when the final curtain fell, Bhishamji escaped through the back door while the police waited for him outside the main entrance. However, these directorial 'changes' were condemned by Party comrades. Bhishamji was subjected to an hour-long diatribe during which he was accused of being a 'right revisionist' for not seeking the Party's permission before making the changes.

In Bombay, in the meantime, Balraj-ji was released from his six months' imprisonment, only to discover that both friends and acquaintances began avoiding him.

After having been disowned by the IPTA and the Communist Party, my life had become a rudderless ship. As if this was not enough, I was having to put up with threats from the police. They were even trying to make me their informer.²⁵

Balraj-ji left the IPTA and the Communist Party.

Conclusions about IPTA

IPTA was floundering. The camaraderie, the sense of deep involvement of sharing a cause, the sense of participation and democratic functioning, which brought out the best creative and unique potential of each person was disappearing.

Bhishamji, like his brother, had initially followed the new Party line, but he was quick to note the changes:

... after a few years of highly rewarding activity, the IPTA had a severe setback in its functioning ... when the policy of the Communist Party underwent a change, it adversely affected the functioning of the IPTA also. It became narrow and sectarian, and lost its broad base and grew weak.²⁶

Moreover, by forcing IPTA to turn into the mouthpiece of the Party line, it succeeded 'in breaking the backbone of the IPTA',²⁷ from which it never recovered.

Introspecting on the latent causes of the failure, Balraj-ji examined his own faults and those of the Party:

Once any section of our people have accepted Marxism as a philosophy of life, they will inevitably become as fanatic as they used to be as believers in a particular religion. Even as Marxists, we continue to be intolerant of other

political systems. The slightest difference of opinion with others is a good enough reason for us to brand them as 'chicken-hearted', 'bourgeois', 'reactionaries' and what have you! And, moreover, we now start worshipping our leaders, as we used to do our prophets or *avatars*! We have even no qualms about sacrificing truth in the interest of our party! A party colleague becomes our friend and of course the man in the opposite camp automatically becomes our enemy - simple logic indeed! Marxism, in fact, expects one to shed one's ego but we Indians end up by becoming all the more egotistic.

I too was no exception. The moment I became a card-holding member of the party, I began undergoing a mental transformation. I took to evaluating art wholly in terms of political expediency. I now looked upon IPTA as a mere tool by which to further the interests of the party. In fact, I was getting to be a petty dictator. ... Though every one of its members had accepted the socialistic goals the IPTA had set itself and its national spirit, they certainly did not believe that the theatre should remain a mere platform to propagate a particular political creed.²⁸

Although no longer a Party card-holder, Balraj-ji remained, as P.C.-ji succinctly put it, to the end of his days a communist 'of an undefined sort'. Subsequently he, along with some others, established the Juhu Art Theatre in Bombay, and acted in some productions of the revived, though truncated Bombay IPTA.

Bhishamji, similarly disillusioned, left the IPTA in 1950 after having been actively involved in it since 1946. He began to concentrate more on his writing. From 1976 to 1986 he became a member and later the General Secretary of the Progressive Writers' Association.

Notes

- 1 Bhisham Sahni, 'The Theatre and I', typed manuscript, pp. 8-9.
- 2 Bhisham Sahni, *Balraj, My Brother*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1981, p. 84.
- 3 Bhisham Sahni, 'The Theatre and I', p. 1.
- 2 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, translated from Hindi, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1979, p. 79.
- 3 Ibid., p. 80.
- 4 Bhisham Sahni, *Balraj, My Brother*, p. 88. In 1946 he staged the play in Rawalpindi with a mixed cast of male and female actors.
- 5 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, pp. 112-13.
- 6 Bhisham Sahni, *Balraj, My Brother*, pp. 87-88.
- 7 P.C. Joshi, 'A Dedicated and Creative Life', in P.C. Joshi (ed.), *Balraj Sahni: An Intimate Portrait*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 60-61.
- 8 Bhisham Sahni, *Balraj, My Brother*, p. 89.
- 9 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, p. 119.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 123-24.
- 11 Ibid., p. 127.
- 12 Bhisham Sahni, *Aaj ke Ateet*, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 2003, p. 146. He elaborates further about that time: 'In March 1947, the communal riot took place in my home-town. It lasted five days, during which it had spread to the surrounding

countryside too. When the riot subsided the town was virtually flooded by refugees from the surrounding villages. A refugee camp had been set up in a local school by the local Congress and I was assigned the task of collecting information and the necessary statistics. In that capacity I had occasion to meet hundreds of persons from the villages and listen to their woeful experiences. I also had the occasion to go to the surrounding villages.' Bhisham Sahni, unpublished manuscript. Many years later these experiences would form the kernel of his novel, *Tamas*.

- 13 Bhisham Sahni, *Balraj, My Brother*, pp. 88-89.
- 14 Bhisham Sahni, speech delivered at the Drama Festival organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Bhisham Sahni, *Aaj ke Ateet*, p. 141.
- 17 Bhisham Sahni, speech delivered at the Drama Festival organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- 18 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, p. 113.
- 19 Bhisham Sahni, 'Contours of Our Composite Culture', P.C. Joshi Memorial Lecture, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 28, Nos. 1-2, January-February 2000, pp. 32-33.
- 20 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, pp. 113-14.
- 21 P.C. Joshi, 'A Dedicated and Creative Life', p. 69.
- 22 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, pp. 153-54.
- 23 Ibid., p. 216.
- 24 Bhisham Sahni, 'The Theatre and I'.
- 25 Bhisham Sahni, *Aaj ke Ateet*, p. 153.
- 26 Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: An Autobiography*, pp. 115-16.

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Transgression of Boundaries: Women of IPTA

Lata Singh

One of the most significant aspects of IPTA has been the participation of women in it. The journeys of most of the women to IPTA have been through their political path. After joining IPTA, the women political workers also became cultural activists/performers. What is significant is that women from 'respectable' sections of society, who till then had shunned performance, became performers in IPTA. How does one see these journeys of women in IPTA from the gender perspective? Did their journeys mark transgression of patriarchal boundaries? This is the main concern of this presentation. However patriarchal transgression only makes meaning if one looks at the parameters defined for women. Studies by Kumkum Sangari and others have highlighted how a redefinition of the female was a crucial feature of the hegemony of the burgeoning middle class during the colonial period. In this hegemonic quest, the question of 'respectability' assumed its sharpest form with regard to issues concerning women. However, within the whole paradigm of respectability and private/public space for women, the space of performance was further marginalised and looked upon with suspicion. Even the subaltern women who were in the public domain looked on women performers with suspicion and considered them as 'loose' women. What is significant in the case of women performers is their availability as visible body in the public space, that is, their body being available for the male gaze. Women performers are the most public of women. Besides, performance as a space also has various unsettling factors. The community of theatre and its space transgress social boundaries of caste, class and gender. Since performers were looked down upon in society, only women from marginalised, 'anonymous' and 'condemned' quarters came into theatre. 'Respectable' women dared not tread on this path. It is against this background that 'respectable' women joining IPTA becomes very significant. However, unlike the earlier women performers, women in IPTA did not come from any entertainment or professional community. In fact, it was the political journeys of these women that took them to IPTA. Even performance was for them politics. IPTA was an important cultural platform to further the political cause. Hence cultural activities were extensions of political activities.

In this presentation, I would like to highlight how the journeys of the women of IPTA are also narratives of defiance of the patriarchal structure. The paper would try to map out some of the key moments of such defiance.

Most of the women come from families which appear to be 'liberal' and less 'restrictive'. They come from families which provide education to girls and the girls are also sent for higher education. Sheela Bhatia says that in her parents' house there was no difference in the upbringing of boys and girls. According to her, 'food, clothes and education given was the same for boys and girls'. Dina Gandhi says that her grandfather, who was the headmaster of a school in Bhavnagar state, was a rebellious person and wanted the women in his house to be educated.

Reba Roychoudhury's father, who had lost faith in his son as he joined Left politics, wanted to send his daughter abroad for studies. Many of these women also received cultural exposure in their childhood. Some of them also participated in cultural activities at school. Dina Gandhi's father was very fond of music and would go to Balgandharva's programmes in Pune. He also went to theatre performances and had theatre performances at home as well. Dina Gandhi got the opportunity to watch these performances too. Besides these, painters and singers came to her house and she had the privilege to interact with them. For Dina Gandhi these must have been manure for the cultivation of her cultural consciousness.

Although girls were provided education in these families, one does not get a sense of real 'freedom' being given to them. There was a certain kind of restriction and control over them. They could operate only within certain parameters defined for them. Though Sheela Bhatia's family and relations were happy with her education and her doing well in studies, she was not allowed to travel outside. Sometimes she had a great desire to go out and see the world outside. According to her, although there was no special restriction, *'zindagi ka daur hi aisa tha'*. After her marriage, her in-laws allowed her to study in Lahore. She had got a scholarship and that had opened the door to education, but, in her own words, at that *'daur mughe bahut jaddojahad karni padi'*. Whatever the freedom given to her, there were some restrictions. Though many enlightened and cultured people, like Balraj Sahni, Khushwant Singh and Balwant Gargi, visited Lahore, she could not interact with them. She could only participate within the parameters of *'bandish'*. She did not have the liberty to go anywhere. She was only allowed to go from hostel to college, and back to hostel after college. She further says, 'at that time what was the life of girls of our houses. Father's house. *Kam dhande*. Waiting for marriage. What turn life would take, who knows. I consider myself to be very fortunate. Obstacles and obstacles. But I did not lose confidence. Whose *'kama'* was this, I cannot say'. Even Reba Roychoudhury in her memoir says that besides school and college education being provided to girls of her house, the women were not allowed to go outside. Her father did not like her involvement in dance-music. There was a ban on song-dance, going out, watching cinema. Even Dina Gandhi says that though her family was considered very forward and progressive, 'we were all protected young ladies and

my mother always wanted us to marry into rich families and we were asked to put the *pallav* on our head. The head had to be kept covered.'

Her sister Shanta Gandhi's (who also joined IPTA) education was stopped when she was engaged at the age of 14 to a rich man's son who was a coal merchant. She was not supposed to study more than her husband. However Shanta Gandhi rebelled against the marriage.

Despite the parameters defined for these women, their world had started changing. Sheela Bhatia's stay in Lahore became a turning-point in her life. According to her, despite restrictions, '*mere dimaag ki yahan parvarish ho rahi thi*'. In Lahore, she got the opportunity to meet many cultured and enlightened people which opened her mind and made her think beyond her own life. She got exposure to the student movement, the Communist Party and Congress activities. She says:

I wonder, if I had not been at Sir Gangaram but at some other place I do not know what turn my life would have taken. ... I still would want to thank the life spent there because that life has sowed many seeds and whatever has ripened is due to that life. ... Gangaram school gave me identity and left its imprint on my life. I am still part of it. To move ahead, cross obstacles, never to die. What I am today is a contribution of that era.

Dina Gandhi became a student leader in high school and along with other students, started the Vidyarthi Sangh Student's Union. The Student's Union did not organise any big strikes, but it conducted study circles, meetings, discussions and demonstrations. Through all this, Dina Gandhi got involved in a completely different atmosphere and activity. She was also very active in cultural activities at school. After matriculation her father sent her to college in Bombay, where she would stay with her sister Shanta Gandhi, on condition that she would not take part in whatever Shanta did, in any cultural activities, in any '*nachna gana*' at college; that she would study seriously and not take part in the annual function of the college. She agreed to her father's conditions. She did not do anything at college but took part in activities outside the college; that was how she says that she got involved in IPTA activities. Her sister Shanta Gandhi was a Communist and because of this Dina Gandhi was able to meet many Communists. She became a regular student worker, a progressive and Leftist activist. Because of her political activities Dina Gandhi was rusticated from college and had to keep changing colleges. She was for one year at Xavier's, two years at Elphinstone and then in Wilson College. All this was exciting for her. Her father feared that her political activities would jeopardise his job. He told her to be on her own as he could not take responsibility for her. So she went to stay with her sister in Lahore.

For Reba Roychoudhury also, the journey was from the confines of home to the student's movement in college. Because of her involvement

with student politics, the Principal warned her father that she would have to leave college. Reba got the support of her brother and was very influenced by her brother's politics. She became a member of the Māhila Atmaraksha Samiti. In the relief committee she sang songs, gave speeches and collected money. Her first performance on the Calcutta stage was in a play on *mahamari* directed by Panu Pal.

This was the story of most of the women who were exposed to politics during the educational phase of their lives. They came under the influence of Left politics and became active with the students' movement. For some women like Reba Roychoudhury and Dina Gandhi, the inspiration also came from their siblings. Dina Gandhi was influenced by the boldness of her sister Shanta Gandhi, who had become a Gandhian and was a rebel from a very young age. Shanta had rebelled against being married off by cutting her hair, which had created quite a stir in her house. Her mother was shocked. She just could not understand what was happening. For Dina Gandhi, 'This is the spirit that alone can make the women stand up and not go under. This, I am sure, had registered in my mind for a long, long time.' Reba Roychoudhury's first political impression and influence was from her brother. Her brother Binoy Roy had left education and got involved in the labour movement. He taught her songs written by him and also told her stories of Russia. Benoy Roy would discreetly write and stage plays in which Reba also acted. He also taught her to dance. Rekha Jain was initiated into politics by her husband Nemichandra Jain.

The story of these women's entry into politics is a narrative of strong resistance from their families and defiance of their families. Reba Roychoudhury's father became 'udaseen' as he had pinned all his hopes on her, after his son left education and joined politics. He wanted to send her abroad for studies. He was opposed to her politics. His opinion was that whatever she wanted to do should be done from home. She tried to explain to her father that she was not doing any bad work. When, one day, she had left home discreetly for political work, her father with the help of police brought her home and kept her under house arrest. After this her brother Benoy Roy took her to the commune. Like many women, she left home with just one set of clothes. In a way, she was disowned by her family, and she says she did not get love from her '*kakima, bua* and '*thakurma*' as she used to leave home all the time for her politics.

Rekha Jain too faced strong opposition from her family. She came from a very conservative family in Agra. At the age of eight she was taught to cook. She was not even nine years old when her '*tauji*' stopped her from going to school. She was in class 3 then. She got married to Nemichandra Jain at the age of twelve-and-a-half. She had to live in *pardah* and '*ghoonghat*'. At an early age, her life was full of '*lok maryada, sanskar* and '*bhari-bhari nasihat*'. Her husband Nemi Jain, who became involved with Left politics, played a crucial role in bringing her out of her conservative setting. Nemi Jain

realised that it was difficult to break conservatism while remaining at home as there was strong opposition from family members. Hence he moved out with Rekha Jain. However, this created a lot of tensions for Rekha. She faced strong opposition and aspersions were also cast upon her. The main concern for her in-laws was how could the daughter-in-law of a Jain family stay alone in another city and that too, '*bepardah*'. This was an image totally different from the accepted image of a '*bahu*'. This was not a good '*lakshan*'. Rekha Jain went through great mental turmoil. On one side was her husband and on the other, her in-laws. If she left home, her relationship with her in-laws would snap. On the other hand she feared that if she did not go to Shujalpur to her husband, she would lose her husband. Despite much oppositions and emotional turmoil, Rekha Jain took the decision to join her husband. She left her elder daughter with her in-laws and joined Nemi Jain with her younger daughter, Rashmi. Because of the atmosphere of anger and opposition, Rekha Jain could not take anything from home to Shujalpur. This was for her a kind of displacement. She faced a lot of accusations. From Shujalpur, Rekha and Nemi Jain moved to Calcutta. Her move to Calcutta was also dramatic.

Rekha Jain started out on a new journey. She shed her *pardah* and became politically active. She got exposure to Marxism and Party work from the comrades who came home. There would be a lot of discussion at home on literature, philosophy and politics, which had an immense influence on her. She attended study circles, went for *prabhat pheris* with different *jathas* of culture *tolis*, and in the evening, went to Muslim *bastis* to do Party work. She also resumed her studies and joined the Marwari Vidyalaya. It became a matter of amusement that a 19–20-year-old mother of two daughters was studying in a school. However Rekha remained resolute in her pursuit. She learnt Bengali and learnt songs from Binoy Roy. She made friends with comrades. For her, learning songs from Binoy-da, going to the *bastis* and meeting people there, and reaching home safely at the time of blackout was possible because of help from these friends. The political ethos and warm atmosphere helped her to liberate herself from conservative traditions, and become confident and '*swalamban*'. She felt the desire to fly. She learnt cycling, badminton and also swimming.

Most of the narratives of IPTA women are of defiance of their families. Where did the strength for such defiance come from? In most of the interviews the women said that the strength came from their political conviction, idealism and the support of the political commune. Their journey as political workers was a defiance of the patriarchal structure which prescribes a certain role for women.

Another significant defining moment for the women was their joining PTA as performers. They saw their role in performance as an extension of their political work. But, as said earlier, this new role marked a very significant defiance by women coming from 'respectable' families. Now these

women performers would perform in the streets, aboard steamers and at many other public venues. The context for the women to join the cultural movement was the famine. Until then various cultural squads would perform on public platforms, but finding women performers who were ready to appear on stage was very difficult. In the wake of the Bengal famine, when many cultural squads were formed, with the formation of only singing squads in the beginning, women started to join with vigour. The participation of women in public performances became more readily accepted and established with the activities of the famine relief committees and cultural squads, and questions of decency, morality, etc., became secondary in the context of the famine.

However, being performers was a defiance of the paradigm of respectability prescribed for these women. In this context, one would like to point to the mental turmoil that Rekha Jain had to undergo. Her joining the cultural squad of the IPTA came as a huge shock to both her and her husband's families. A girl who in her childhood had been kept away from dance and not even allowed to study was joining a dance-group and performing in front of all! The strain of her relations with the families further increased. In the social context of Agra, both in her parents and in-laws' houses, she was not only criticised but aspersions were cast on her. She received a very nasty letter from her mother-in-law. The letter said that her learning dance and that too learning with men was a big stigma and '*kalank*' for the family. At the end of the letter were such harsh words as: 'if you were stone, then I would have swept you in the river so that I do not have to see this face'. Once, during the holidays, when Rekha Jain had gone to her in-laws' house with Nemi Jain and tried touching her mother-in-law's feet, her mother-in-law withdrew her feet with force, saying '*Kis muh se pair chhu rahi hai? Pata nahi kitne ghaton ka pani pi hai.*'

In fact, the space and life of the IPTA cultural troupe was looked upon with suspicion by the society at large. In the 1940s for unmarried women and men to stay together in a commune and travel with the cultural troupe comprising of both men and women, was considered very scandalous. It unsettled the notions of public and private space. Apprehension was also linked to women's sexuality. Their lifestyle was often criticised, to the extent that even Gandhi's paper, *Harijan*, criticised them for immoral activities. When the troupe went to Meerut to perform, although they were looked after by a landlord at whose house they were staying, the women of the house were not allowed to interact with the women of the troupe. There would be slogans condemning them for moral turpitude. They were jeered with cries of '*Radhey Radhey*', suggesting that like Radha, they were involved in illicit liaisons. Reba Roychoudhury in her memoir says that there was not only social and political opposition, but that in women's name '*kutsa kar*' posters were brought out. But she says that her commitment to ideals was so strong

that she did not bother. Thus it was the political conviction of these women that made them withstand such moral condemnation.

For most of the women, their political journey was exhilarating. For many women of IPTA, the experience of the cultural squad commune was the highpoint of their life. Life at the commune was very different from the kind of life most of them had had earlier. Those two to three years they spent in the commune changed everything for them. Rekha Jain talks very highly of her experience in the commune – of her learning dance and the discipline in the cultural squad. In fact the experience transformed her entire mind-set. After joining the cultural squad her conservative '*sanskar*' got a big jolt due to teachers like Shanti Bardhan. For her the process of learning dance was also a struggle to get liberated from conservative '*sanskar*'. She realised that her '*mun ki jhijhak*' had prohibited body flexibility for dance. The conflict of family '*sanskar*' that was happening within her would many times come in the way of her properly learning dance. She went through great inner conflict. She talks of the dilemma of doing a character in a play directed by Shombhu Mitra. It was the character of a woman who openly fights with her mother-in-law. While playing this character, because of her conservative family background, Rekha Jain found it difficult to pull the hair of her mother-in-law and shout. The atmosphere of the commune broke her '*jhijhak*' and '*bandhan*' and raised her confidence. The freedom of childhood which was suppressed because of her very early marriage once again bloomed in such an atmosphere.

Dina Gandhi in her interview also says that being part of the cultural squad was a tremendous experience. According to her:

We toured all over the country. ... Thousands and thousands of people attended our shows. For six months we rehearsed and for six months we toured. We went to each province, to so many small towns. I have seen my country the way it should be seen. We were just living one life and you know, three bogeys were booked and we used to sleep in that. There were no hotels. After the show you come back to the bogey, go to another place and do the show there. This was a tremendous experience.

Dina Gandhi, in her interview to Pratibha Agrawal, says, '*Mein usko khad ka kaam kehti hoon*'. Reba Roychoudhury in her memoir says that she got the strength of struggle because of her '*saathi*'. For her, the strength to struggle came from the atmosphere of 'laughter, galp, dance, play, writing, reading, alochana'.

Malini Bhattacharya, in a study, has highlighted how the commune was also a non-exploitative space for women performers as compared to the space of commercial professional theatre. The actresses of professional theatre mostly talk of the pain and betrayal they experienced.

Another aspect one would like to highlight is how in their personal lives

too, the IPTA women were negotiating domesticity and matrimonial relationships which were different from mainstream notions of 'married households'. Preeti Banerjee talks of how the Party was banned the year that she got married. She says:

after marriage we [she and her husband] did not have contact for five years. We had to go underground. Three months after marriage we went to Darjeeling and the very next day he was arrested by the police. ... I was in jail for six months. When after five years the ban was lifted, I could meet him.

Dina Gandhi became a full-time cultural worker when she joined the central troupe. She was married by then. She says, after joining the central troupe,

I forgot about my home life and everything. I got thoroughly involved in my activities and my husband also got fully involved in his party activities and we drifted apart. In those days these things didn't have that kind of an impact – if it happened to me today it would have, perhaps. You know, at that time the priorities were different. At that time I went along with the *prabaha*, the current.

Reba Roychoudhury met her husband Sajal in the Gan Natya organisation. Faith in each other and idealism helped them sail through difficult times. Even after marriage, she remained active in politics and was even jailed.

Malini Bhattacharya, in her work, has foregrounded how the experience of men and women activists living and working together in difficult and dangerous circumstances constantly necessitated overcoming gender and class barriers. To quote her:

In their cultural as well as their political assignments during this entire decade, women were moving into spaces that had been entirely unfamiliar to women of their class. They had to spend time continuously in close proximity with male comrades and in worker and peasant households in very unconventional circumstances. This opened the IPTA activists' minds towards a different gender culture in many ways and perhaps this is what sustained the enthusiasm of the women activists.

In post-independence India, most of these women carved their own identities, exhibiting confidence and boldness in their work. Some took to the political path and some carved a niche for themselves in cultural activities. For Rekha Jain it was a journey from the '*ghoonghat*' to etching her identity in children's theatre in Delhi. She acted and directed plays in IPTA. She motivated girls in Allahabad to join IPTA, and would pick up the girls, and drop them back. The kind of confidence that she exhibited comes out in the words of Mohan Upreti. Once when teaching dance, when some boys were not doing their steps properly, she held a boy's hand to demonstrate the gesture. The boy became very self-conscious. According Upreti, who was that

student, 'when I saw for the first time Rekhajee as an *akeli ladki* who was teaching boys without any *jhijhak*, I was surprised (*dang*). But I got a lot of motivation from you. In this way you are my first guru.'

Sheela Bhatia became active in the National Cultural Front of Kashmir, where she acted and directed plays. In fact, she was the only woman amongst them, who would sit with them and eat with them. She was the first woman to broadcast on Kashmir radio. She returned to Delhi in 1951 and formed Delhi Art Theatre. Sneha Sanyal, Usha Bhagat and Swatantra Prakash were also part of it. Sheela Bhatia wrote and directed plays. She taught acting at the National School of Drama and wanted NSD to play a crucial role in the theatre movement. Her residence became a space for theatre workshops.

Another crucial aspect to look at from the gender perspective would be the position of women within the organisation of IPTA. Within the organisation the women were primarily performers, and only a few emerged as composers and directors. In her study, Malini Bhattacharya has noted:

Within the movement there were women capable of writing and producing plays but such aspects rarely getting highlighted is an indication of the limits within which a woman activist was expected to operate. The Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti did have its cultural programme, but within the IPTA, they were performers rather than directors. Besides, very few women were in the position of leadership and decision-making in the IPTA organisation. Women who built up the Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti in Bengal from 1942 were quite often also active in the IPTA, but these activists too were never in a position of leadership there.

These women were conscious political workers, aware of the shifts taking place in the cultural squad, and having their own opinion on these shifts and on the disbanding of the cultural squad. It is not important whether they had differences of opinion on such matters, but what is a matter of concern is that despite their being politically conscious, the women did not take a political stand.

Dina Gandhi in her interview says:

I was not involved in policy making, and in the organisational structure. I was a performer. But all of us, the performers of the central troupe of IPTA, were conscious workers somewhere else. So we were not dull performers. We were alive, reactive to everything that was happening. We all had come from different provinces with one discipline – we were all connected with progressive left movements.' ... We were made more and more conscious of not allowing ourselves to break it up, not to shake it up too much, not to disturb it at a wrong place. Because this was a sort of laboratory experiment. ... Spirit of India and India Immortal were two different tours. The audience had changed. We were alive to the audience which we had seen before. We were alive to those issues which had caused us to transform ourselves, translate

ourselves. But not to the kind of audience we were meeting with in Calcutta, in Bombay, in Delhi, wherever we went. There we were completely in awe of Robuda and Shantida. So it became like they were the masters and we were the tools – at least I felt that. But we never questioned anything. This is the worst thing. If we had questioned it, if we had been culturally strong enough to stand up and ask, then even they would have understood what it was that they were trying to do. They did not understand either. Why? Who should question us? We are the creators. We decide.

Gul Bardhan says in her interview:

During our tour we received a lot of appreciation everywhere we went and because of our work a large number of intellectuals and artists came closer to the party and many became party supporters. But the party did not realize that. When we returned to Bombay we were told that it had been decided to disband the central squad. ... There was no debate or discussion. ... All the members of the central squad felt very sad and sorry about the whole thing. We felt that this was absolutely wrong but we were too young to speak against the leadership.

This paper has tried to map the journeys of IPTA women, marked by transgression of patriarchal boundaries at various moments in their lives. Although the transgression was not triggered by feminist politics, most of the women were aware that the opposition to their politics came from patriarchy. But such transgression could not translate into challenging the hierarchy based on gender within the organisation, and there is a need to problematise this too.

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Sahmat Seminar on the Legacy and Relevance of the Progressive Cultural Movement

Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashasta

Memories are constantly invoked as metaphors. Sometimes for glory, and sometimes for what is being missed. In the tradition/modernity debate in India, often posed as binaries, memories of old traditions and those evolving into the contemporary are used as canons to discuss the present and, sometimes, to provide a roadmap to chart the course of the present. However, in these debates, we tend to miss those historical junctures where tradition is used to further progress. These are time-periods in history where tradition and modernity within the periphery of a nation have united, have shown resistance to conservatism, and have rendered new modes of thinking. And often these periods are those, especially in South Asia's context, when a progressive political and cultural movement has taken shape. These are periods when the intellectuals and political workers of the nation have gathered together towards a unified cause, despite their varied understandings. Often these periods are set against a political backdrop.

In the context of the Indian nationalist struggle of the 1930s and 1940s, the progressive cultural movement in Indian writing and theatre was at its peak. While most of the artists associated with it had a Marxist disposition lending colonial realism to their art forms, others too were strongly influenced by the Left cultural traditions which were all-pervasive in the post-Depression world. Incidentally, the most reputed writers of India till date, like Munshi Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand, come from this lineage. Similarly, some of the biggest actors on the stage and on celluloid of the 1940s and 1950s, like Balraj Sahni and Damayanti Sahni, were from the progressive cultural movement. The movement, which was formed through channelisation of progressive thought across continents, received the full support of the Communist Party of India under the leadership of its first General Secretary, P.C. Joshi. It not only tried to sensitise the masses with modern, anti-colonial, nationalist thoughts, but also used traditional symbols of India (but not religious) to propagate their programme.

On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (Sahmat) organised a symposium to discuss as much as to celebrate the legacy of the PWA and its counterpart in drama, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), in New Delhi. The symposium that was organised in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in October 2011 was the third of such conferences in independent India. This one came after a long gap of three decades. Attended by profes-

sional academics and artists of a Left-liberal political hue, and other cultural activists, the three-day programme not only discussed the relevance of a Left-wing cultural movement in contemporary India, but also tried to map the reasons behind the decline of the movement after India attained independence. The critical introspection was not confined to the decline of the PWA and IPTA, but also of Leftwing cultural movements in present times. It is precisely for this reason that the symposium was named 'The legacy and relevance of the progressive cultural movement in India'.

The first session was a discussion on the broad parameters that any progressive cultural movement should set for itself. The session, chaired by academic Mihir Bhattacharya, had the eminent economist Prabhat Patnaik, theoretician Aijaz Ahmad, historian K.N. Panikkar and media personality Sashi Kumar as speakers; they spoke on the macro-causes of a movement's rise and decline. While at one stage it should keep in mind the internationalist goal of communism, at another stage it should also cater to the political demands of a country. This was the thrust of what Prabhat Patnaik had to say. To enunciate his argument, he slightly departed from an orthodox Marxian view of shaping the cultural movement in India. While classical Marxism intends to address the inequality between the rich and the poor classes to further the political movement, Patnaik stressed the need to also focus on identity issues in India, especially that of caste and gender. For this, the Marxist cultural movement should operate within the nation's boundary to strengthen the political cause, as well as propagate equality in the internationalist sphere. The two could happen either simultaneously or one after the other. Only then, would the leap from micro-fascisms to communism be analytical, and hence self-sustaining. It was also implicit in his paper that the progressive cultural movement in pre-independence India gathered as much steam because of the nationalist, anti-colonial struggle as it lost during the post-independence period because of its failure to address the identity issues of India. It is imperative that the movement take into account these concerns, or else it will not be able to rise to the challenges posed by the imperialism of global finance capital.

While Patnaik talked about the immediate need to reformulate the progressive cultural agenda in India, Aijaz Ahmad talked about the West Asian and North African revolutionary uprisings in 2011, placing internationalism as the core. He did not differ from Patnaik in what he was saying in the context of the changing political milieu of the world and how people want change. Narrating the recent people's uprisings in many parts of world, he said:

What these countless people are searching for are not only new political forms but also new aesthetic forms, indeed the ways in which the aesthetic now permeates the political, so that radical politics and novel forms of the aesthetic emerge together, as two faces of a single emancipatory desire. What

we witnessed in Tahrir Square, for instance, was not only the will among tens of thousands of people to stand the ground until the dictatorship fell, but also hundreds of painters producing a festival of colours, poets reciting new poems composed on the spot, singers who sang through the nights, and bands that played even as almost a thousand of their compatriots were killed by the regime's goons and the security forces.

The permeation of the political and the aesthetic was a distinguishing feature of all these uprisings. Ahmad talked about many international publications that lent speed to the birth of an institutionalised progressive cultural movement, and pointed out how the publication of *Angarey* in 1933 was a significant moment in fuelling the PWA. He offered a proposition that the Indian progressive movement was not just a Left-leaning intellectual and cultural forum; it was, in fact, 'a point of confluence' between a

socialist imagination, the progressive arts as they were evolving across the world, the anti-colonial movement that was its immediate political context, the various reform movements that had preceded even the anti-colonial movement as such, and behind all that the values of the various humanisms and medieval theisms that we know now, broadly speaking, as the Bhakti and the Sufi-Saint tradition.

In discussing the spontaneity of these movements, he did not quite agree that a progressive movement can have a fixed sectarian agenda of any liberal colour, but it should always be the need of the era and time as it is a witness to revolutions across the world.

K.N. Panikkar raised a pertinent question. Why is it that a movement that started with so much promise in India is in such a dismal state today? He pointed out that a progressive cultural movement is not just about politics, but also about the creative aspects of art. Only when it is judiciously used to appeal to the masses can it be successful. While making this point, he also wrote:

A fundamental change in perspective that the progressive cultural movement brought about was a conception about the relationship between culture and politics. Instead of excluding politics from the cultural concerns the movement brought it to centrestage. European writers like Maxim Gorky, Andre Gide, E.M. Forster, Andre Malraux and others, who initiated the progressive movement, were moved by the danger inherent in fascism and the exploitative nature of imperialism.

He further elaborated that in taking the political cause forward, the cultural agenda and cultural activities got pushed to the background instead of being taken up simultaneously. The politics of the progressive movement dominated cultural practices so much that the movement lost its creativity and energy, and instead evolved without any autonomy from the Commu-

nist Party. He said that the cultural activism necessary at this juncture can be encapsulated into two major tasks:

First, cultural interventions which would promote the formation of counter-hegemony, what Harold Pinter in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech described as 'the entry into oppression's' closed door. Secondly, the creation of a popular critical consciousness is necessary through uninterrupted and continuous cultural interventions.

He said that political workers in a few states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala are trying to reinvent the progressive cultural agenda, but it has to be taken up at a pan-Indian level. Only then, a Leftwing cultural movement can appeal to the larger masses.

Sashi Kumar's paper was a critique of the mediosphere. It elaborated on the hegemonic expansion of the mainstream media with its imperialistic designs in the age of digital media, and stressed the need for a counter-offensive in the blogosphere, and particularly with the internet playing a greater role in furthering the progressive cultural movement. However, he sounded pessimistic as he said that all the rebellious instruments of media in the counter-hegemonic initiative have tended to fall in line with imperialistic forces after its institutionalisation in due historical course. He cited the example of technology being a rebellious instrument in countering global finance's designs in the West but which has been appropriated by the capitalist forces for their benefit at present.

The historical shift from classic capitalism to monopoly to finance capital entails a parallel shift in the media-culture confluence, realism to modernism to post-modernism being grounded on the technological move from the photographic to the cinematic to the electronic. One characteristic of this rapid shift has been a tendency towards 'flatism', the world of representation shunning depths and contours, and directing all gazes to surfaces and spectacles. The synchronic organisation of texts yield place to the non-linear. Consequently, attention becomes habitually flitting and homogenised, parallel to the miscellaneous flow, or rather, the torrent, of images and sounds. The texts become self-reflexive, minimising their referential function, so that nothing outside the closed sensorium of texts disrupts the cosy feel-good quiescence of the great consuming public. But the hidden agenda of finance capital and the conniving State apparatus make this sensorium a part of the surveillance ever-tightening its grip over the people, denying space to social desire, stifling access to inter-communication. The working of the internet shows up the trend. The job of disruption and resistance falls therefore to the vanguard of the people who work in the interstices of the system to subvert its ends, and to those who physically come out to be together and tear asunder the magic web of media. The recent upheavals in the Arab world and elsewhere demonstrate the power of the radical tradition which seeks both to understand the world and change it.

The session was an apt introduction to the other sessions that were to follow, and to talk about the intricate details of the progressive cultural movement in India. Over the next two days there were a diverse range of papers exploring art in various forms: elements of the 'progressive' in photography, Indian writing, theatre, street plays, and also memoirs that deal with the great tradition of the Indian progressive cultural movement in the 1940s. The seminar also critically reflected on the areas that need attention.

Theatre personality Samik Bandyopadhyay talked about a particular moment in Bengal when many writers of the time dedicated a book to Rabindranath Tagore, in which they made their anti-imperialist, progressive agenda clear for the first time. While at one level they were severely critical of the 'bourgeois leanings' in Indian writing, at another level the artists coming from a Left doctrinal position came together even before the Leftwing movement started in Bengal. They were not necessary from the Communist Party, but were indirectly or directly linked to it. The cultural front and the political front both coexisted and were autonomous of each other. According to Bandyopadhyay, it is this autonomy that needs to be respected to produce good literature.

Art critic Sadanand Menon talked about a forgotten figure in the progressive cultural movement in India, Harindranath Chattopadhyay. He was a man of great merits: a poet, a classical singer, an actor and a political activist who ended up becoming a Member of Parliament. He reminded us of how Harindranath used Indian folk forms to appeal to the people during his performances. Menon's paper, through Harindranath's example, showed that the progressive cultural movement should have trained artists who give attention to their art forms even as they are devoted to political activism. In doing so, traditional folklore could be used; mannerisms of speech could be used to invoke realism in art.

P.C. Joshi as the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of India had a knack to pick talented youths from the hinterland and the cities, and promote their art. Almost all the artists picked up by him became legends in the Indian progressive movement. His encouragement was for all art forms. Thus we find Sunil Janah's photography being remembered even today, or Chittaprosad's sketches being used even today. Ram Rahman made a presentation showing how Janah's photography documented, among many things, the Bengal famine in the 1940s. The photographs, though speaking of absolute misery, were subtle in their frame and composition, and could match any world-class photographer of those times; and yet, Janah's political cause rendered a great deal of depth to his photographs.

In another presentation, Sumangala Damodaran documented the evolution of revolutionary songs that continued unabated till the 1980s. As a staunch proponent of this form of music, she appealed to the professional musicians to join the revolutionary brigade. Revolutionary songs, she said, had the constraint and compulsion of making the music popular as their

primary targets were the peasants and workers. In her presentation, she showed how typically Indian tradition and behaviour were used in songs to mobilise the masses.

Mihir Bhattacharya spoke of the Indian progressive cultural movement when it was at its zenith and described it as a moment which carried forward the movement in disparate forms. He said that despite the fact that the PWA and IPTA disintegrated after independence, it was the legacy and culture that was left behind that gave the artists of subsequent generations the boost to create ideological art forms. He talked about Satyajit Ray, who was never directly linked to the Communist Party, and who directly incorporated the values of the Bengal Renaissance and the European enlightenment. And of Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen who were directly linked to the Communist Party and yet lent cinematic brilliance to their art.

Anuradha Roy, while describing the movement in Bengal, spoke of the innovative music of Salil Chowdhury and Jyotindra Maitra, but also noted that it appealed only to the elite or the *bhadralok* in Bengal and could not arouse the folk sentiments dominant in the countryside. While this was a paper presented on Bengal, there were similar papers describing the experiences of Maharashtra read by Subodh More, of Kerala by Sunil P. Elayidom, of Assam by Prachee Dewri, of Orissa by Biswamoy Pati and of Andhra Pradesh by V. Ramakrishna.

There was a full-fledged session on Hindi and Urdu writers. Chanchal Chauhan pointed out how the regional writing needs to incorporate the contemporary realities into its fold and talk more about changed realities in globalised India. M.M.P. Singh talked about the changed forms of imperialism, and narrated examples of land struggles, corruption in law, rising inequalities of income and showed how the imperialist media covered these issues. These are themes that regional writers could focus on in their writings either as satire or tragedy, he said.

Some of the speakers highlighted the fact that artists from marginalised backgrounds have always propelled the Leftwing cultural movement towards thinking on identity issues. In an interesting paper on the renowned tribal artist from Santiniketan, Ramkinkar Baij, Santhosh S. showed how in his sculptures Baij not only induced the progressive culture, but also progressive tendencies in tribal lifestyle. Describing one of the artist's sculptures, *Mill Call*, Santhosh said:

The Santals in Ramkinkar's *Mill Call* are not the primitive ideal or the 'unchanging community' of Mitter. Here, Ramkinkar looks at modernity from a subaltern's point of view. In a general sense, modernity here appears as an emancipatory discourse and a historically available option for subalterns to break away from the oppressive machinery of traditional social system. *Mill Call*, as many scholars have already pointed out, symbolises the modern order of time. The movement and vibrant rhythm which is present in this

sculptural representation of Santals is not a testimony of their primitive energy but, on the contrary, a move away from the primitivist discourse of the nationalist intelligentsia.

While theorising the position of women within IPTA, Lata Singh said that the gender issue was not important in the context of the nationalist struggle. Issues relating to famine, class exploitation and colonialism were more dominant. While women were respected, they never attained the position of leaders. This happened not because of a conscious choice by the leaders of the movement but as a natural impediment put forward by the society of that time. However, the women who joined the IPTA had left their homes, much to the wrath of their families, and had devoted their lives to the progressive cause. This argument came forward the best with the example of Rekha Jain, who came from a traditional Jain conservative family and yet became one of the most devoted activists of the IPTA. These were issues, Lata Singh felt, that are unresolved even today.

The seminar saw the participation of director M.S. Sathya who narrated his experiences with the IPTA. Kalpana Sahni, daughter of Bhisham Sahni and niece of Balraj Sahni, read out from their memoirs of the experiences within IPTA and how it changed the outlook of a whole generation. Moloya-shree Hashmi narrated the experience of the theatre group Jana Natya Manch, founded by Safdar Hashmi and others, and functioning in full force even now, and how they tried to reach out to workers and margin-alised sections of society with innovative scripts. She said that most of Janam's plays were well received and that they collectively work on the scripts a lot.

Through the three days, the evenings were devoted to movie screenings at the Sahmat office. The films shown were: the only film produced by IPTA, *Dharti ke Lal*, starring Balraj Sahni and Damayanti Sahni and Ali Sardar Jafri; *Komal Gandhar* by Ritwik Ghatak; and *Neecha Nagar* by Chetan Anand.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the PWA was reason enough to contemplate on the progressive cultural movement in India. India is at a crucial juncture where mixed forces are influencing the Indian polity. The rise of communalism and fascism in the decades from the 1980s and especially after the demolition of the Babri Masjid poses a severe threat to the Indian secular tradition. In such circumstances, artists need to theorise their course even further, and the Sahmat seminar is just a beginning. Alongside this, international finance capital is gradually becoming more and more powerful in the Indian polity. Projected as capitalism's success, the Indian government, too, is pledging full support to it. In addition, the Left political parties have not reaped much electoral benefit in recent years. However, progressive cultural movements have always responded to the need of the hour. One may quote Mulk Raj Anand talking about the birth of the PWA:

... those dark foggy November days of the year 1935 in London when after the

disillusionment and disintegration of years of suffering in India and conscious of the destruction of most of our values through the capitalist crisis of 1931, a few of us emerged from the slough of despondency of the cafes and garrets of Bloomsbury and formed the nucleus of the Progressive Writers' Association. For, since the historic meeting in the Nanking restaurant in Denmark Street where the original manifesto was read, through the eager, well-attended fortnightly meetings of the London branch where essays, stories and poems were read and lectures delivered (and through less eager, ill-attended meetings), through the first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference held in Lucknow in April 1936, and the opening of branches or committees in the various linguistic zones, through the provincial conferences and the opening of more branches, our organisation has today gathered into it or around it, the most significant writers in India and commands membership so large that it forms, quantitatively, one of the largest blocks for the defence of culture in the world.

Munshi Premchand, too, in his first Presidential Address at the PWA Conference, had urged the writers to talk about realist aspects in their writing as opposed to fantastical tales of the past. He had said:

Hitherto we had been content to discuss language and its problems; the existing critical literature of Urdu and Hindi has dealt with the construction and the structure of the language alone. This was doubtless an important and necessary work and the pioneers of our literature have supplied this preliminary need and performed their task admirably. But language is a means, not an end; a stage, not the journey's end. Its purpose is to mould our thoughts and emotions and to give them the right direction. We have now to concern ourselves with the meaning of things and to find the means of fulfilling the purpose for which the language is constructed. This is the main purpose of this conference.

He added:

Our literary taste is undergoing a rapid transformation. It is coming more and more to grips with the realities of life; it interests itself with society or man as a social unit. It is not satisfied now with the singing of frustrated love, or with writing to satisfy only our sense of wonder; it concerns itself with the problems of our life and such themes as have a social value. The literature which does not arouse in us a critical spirit, or satisfy our spiritual needs, which is not 'force-giving' and dynamic, which does not awaken our sense of beauty, which does not make us face the grim realities of life in a spirit of determination, has no use for us today. It cannot even be termed as literature.

Premchand pointed out:

Today, however, literature has undertaken a new task, and its instrument is our inherent sense of beauty; it tried to achieve its aim by arousing this sense

of beauty in us. The more a writer develops this sense through his observation of nature, the more effective will his writings become. All that is ugly or detestable, all that is inhuman, becomes intolerable to such a writer. He becomes the standard bearer of humanity, of moral uprightness, of nobility. It becomes his duty to help all those who are downtrodden, oppressed and exploited – individuals or groups – and to advocate their cause. And his judge is itself – it is before society that he brings his plant. He knows that the more realistic his story is, the more full of expression and movement his picture, the more intimate his observation of human nature, psychology, the greater the effect he will produce. It is not even enough that from a psychological point of view his characters resembled human beings; we must further be satisfied that they are *real* human beings of bone and flesh. We do not believe in an imaginary man; his acts and his thoughts do not impress us:

Further, he denounced the invocation of religion and God in every form of writing, and talked about the brutality humanity faces. Such an understanding completely changed the landscape of Indian writing and one must not forget that it happened under the platform of the PWA that continues to influence contemporary writers.

Obviously, the context has changed in India. However, the misery among humans because of structural violence refuses to go. We are challenged by new forms of exploitation, much more diverse, more nuanced, and not too ostensible. The progressive cultural movement has to address all these and much more in furthering the political cause. The Sahmat seminar discussed all this, and it remains to be seen how the progressive artists of our times respond to the challenges discussed. Bertolt Brecht had once said: 'Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.' He had asked the people not to fear death but an inadequate life. Perhaps, at this crucial juncture, when the Indian progressive cultural movement faces new challenges and need to reinvent itself, as discussed above, it could start from this optimism that can never die, as class inequality continues to increase.

Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashasta is a Senior Reporter with *Frontline*.

DOCUMENT

The Nature and Purpose of Literature

Munshi Premchand

Presidential Address of Munshi Premchand, delivered at the First All India Progressive Writers' Conference, held at Lucknow on 10 April 1936. (Translated from Hindustani.)

This conference is a memorable occasion in the history of our literature. Hitherto we had been content to discuss language and its problems; the existing critical literature of Urdu and Hindi has dealt with the construction and the structure of the language alone. This was doubtless an important and necessary work. And the pioneers of our literature have supplied this preliminary need and performed their task admirably. But language is a means, not an end; a stage, not the journey's end. Its purpose is to mould our thoughts and emotions, and to give them the right direction. We have now to concern ourselves with the meaning of things, and to find the means of fulfilling the purpose for which language has been constructed. This is the main purpose of this conference.

Literature properly so-called is not only realistic, true to life, but is also an expression of our experiences and of the life that surrounds us. It employs easy and refined language which alike affects our intellect and our sentiments. Literature assumes these qualities only when it deals with the realities and experiences of life. Fairy tales and romantic stories of princely lovers may have impressed us in olden days, but they mean very little to us today. Unless literature deals with reality it has no appeal for us.

Literature can best be defined as a criticism of life. The literature of our immediate past had nothing to do with actuality; our writers were living in a world of dreams and were writing things like *Fasanai Ajaib* or *Chandra Kanta* tales told only for entertainment, or to satisfy our sense of wonder. Life and literature were considered to be two different things which bore no relation to each other. Literature reflects the age. In the past days of decadence the main function of literature was to entertain the parasitic class. In this literature the dominant notes were either sex or mysticism, pessimism or fatalism. It was devoid of vigour, originality, and even the power of observation.

But our literary taste is undergoing a rapid transformation. It is coming more and more to grips with the realities of life; it interests itself with society or man as a social unit. It is not satisfied now with the singing of frustrated love; or with writing to satisfy only our sense of wonder; it concerns itself

with the problems of our life; and such themes as have a social value. The literature which does not arouse in us a critical spirit, or satisfy our spiritual and intellectual needs, which is not 'force-giving' and dynamic, which does not awaken our sense of beauty, which does not make us face the grim realities of life in a spirit of determination, has no use for us today. It cannot even be termed as literature.

In the past, religion had taken upon itself the task of striving after man's spiritual and moral guidance; it used fear and cajolery, reward and retribution as its chief instruments in this work. Today, however, literature has undertaken a new task, and its instrument is our inherent sense of beauty; it tries to achieve its aim by arousing this sense of beauty in us. The more a writer develops this sense through his observation of nature, the more effective will his writing become. All that is ugly or detestable, all that is inhuman, becomes intolerable to such a writer. He becomes the standard bearer of humanity, of moral uprightness, of nobility. It becomes his duty to help all those who are downtrodden, oppressed and exploited – individuals or groups – and to advocate their cause. And his judge is society itself – it is before society that he brings his plaint. He knows that the more realistic his story is, the more full of expression and movement his picture, the more intimate his observation of human nature, human psychology, the greater the effect he will produce. It is not even enough that from a psychological point of view, his characters resemble human beings; we must further be satisfied that they are *real* human beings of bones and flesh. We do not believe in an imaginary man; his acts and his thoughts do not impress us.

The question may be asked, but what is beauty? Why does a waterfall, the sunset, and other such natural scenes and phenomena affect us? Because, there is a certain harmony of colour or sound in them. We ourselves are created by a harmony of elements, and our spirit always seeks the same balance and harmony in everything else. It is the harmony which creates beauty. Nature demands that this harmony should exist everywhere, and, the more art keeps in touch with nature and with reality, the better it will be.

In this sense, the name 'progressive writer' is defective – an artist or a writer is by his very nature progressive. But perhaps it is necessary to use this qualifying word because progress has a different meaning for different people. For us 'progressive' is that which creates in us the power to act; which makes us examine those subjective and objective causes that have brought us to such a pass of sterility and degeneration; and finally which helps us to overcome and remove those causes, and become men once again. We have no use today for those poetical fancies which overwhelm us with their insistence on the ephemeral nature of this world and whose only effect is to fill our hearts with despondency and indifference. We must, resolutely, give up writing those love romances with which our periodicals are flooded. We have no time to waste over sentimental art. The only art which has value for us today is that which is dynamic and leads to action.

According to us, subjective art is that which drags us down to inaction and passivity; and such an art is good neither for the individual nor for the society. I have no hesitation in saying that I judge art from the point of view of its utility. Undoubtedly, the aim of art is to satisfy our sense of beauty; and it is the key to our spiritual happiness. But happiness itself is a thing of 'utility'. The same object from this point of view, may stir in us feelings of joy or sorrow.

But beauty like everything else is not absolute; it too has relative value. The same thing which gives happiness to one, causes pain to another. A rich man sitting in his beautiful garden and listening to the song of the birds thinks of paradise; to a poor but intelligent human being who regards this pomp of wealth as being tainted with the blood of workers, it is the most hateful thing.

Brotherhood and equality, from the dawn of human culture and civilisation have been the golden dream of idealists. Religious leaders have made repeated attempts to realise their dream by creating religious, moral and spiritual sanctions. But they have not succeeded. Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, all the prophets, tried without success to lay the foundation of their equality on moral precepts without any success. Today the distinction between high and low, rich and poor, is manifesting itself with a brutality which has never been surpassed before. There is a saying amongst us that to try that which has already been tried is a sign of stupidity – we shall fail again if we attempt to attain our goal with the help of religion or ethics.

Are we then to give up our ideals? If that were so, the human race might as well perish. The ideal which we have cherished since the dawn of civilisation; for which man has made God knows how many sacrifices; which gave birth to religion – the history of human society is a history of the struggle for the fulfilment of this ideal – we too have to place that ideal before ourselves; we have to accept it as an unalterable reality and then see the vulgar pride, ostentation and lack of sensibility in the one, the strength of modesty, faith and endeavour in the other. And our art will notice those things only when our artistic vision takes the entire universe within its purview; when the entire humanity will form its subject matter; then it will no longer be tied to the apron strings of a particular class. Then we shall no longer tolerate a social system under which a single individual can tyrannise over thousands of human beings; then our self-respecting humanity will rise the standard of revolt against capitalism, militarism and imperialism; and we shall not sit quiet and inane after doing a little bit of creative work on pieces of paper, but we shall actively participate in building that new order which is not opposed to beauty, good taste and self-respect. The role of literature is not simply to provide us with amusement, or recreation; it does not follow, but is, on the contrary, a torch-bearer to all the progressive movements in society.

We sometimes complain that literary men are not given an honourable place in society, that is to say, in Indian society. In other civilised countries,

literary men are placed very high on the ladder of social esteem. The highest placed people in the land consider it an honour to meet and to know these men. But, then, India is still in many ways living under medieval conditions. If our writers have played the sycophant to the rich to earn their livelihood by flattery, if they are unaware of the dynamic forces working in modern society, if they choose to shut themselves up in ivory towers, completely oblivious of their surroundings, it is not surprising that they find themselves as a class more and more discarded by society. It is true that writers are born and not made, but we would not forget that rigorous intellectual, moral, spiritual and emotional discipline which Aristotle has prescribed for them. With us a simple inclination to write is considered sufficient reason for a man to take to the profession of writing. He need not equip himself for it, he need have no knowledge of politics, economics or psychology; and still he will be a writer. This should not be so, for it is a sign of stagnation.

The ideal which we want to put before literature today is not that of subjectivism or individualism, for literature does not see the individual as something apart from society, but considers him as a social unit; because his existence is dependent on the society as a whole. Taken apart from society he is a mere cypher and non-entity. It follows, therefore, that those of us who have the good fortune to be educated and who have been endowed with a trained intellect, have certain obligations towards society. Just as we consider the capitalist to be an usurper and an oppressor, because he lives on the labour of others, in the same way we should strongly condemn the 'intellectual capitalist', who, after having received the best education uses it for his own private ends. It is the duty of our intellectuals to serve society in every possible way. They should acquire not only the art of writing well, but should also acquaint themselves with the general condition of society. If we read the reports of International Writers' Conferences we find that there is hardly a subject concerning life, literature, economic problems, historical controversies, philosophy, which is not discussed there. When we compare ourselves with these people, we really feel ashamed of our ignorance. We must, therefore, raise the cultural level of our writers. I know it is difficult under the present economic system, but let us at least strive after this. If we do not reach the top of the mountain, we shall at least raise ourselves from the surface of the earth to a higher place. With love to guide our activities, and with service of humanity as the outward manifestation of this love, there is no difficulty which we cannot overcome. For those who are after wealth and riches, there is no place in the temple of love. If we place our services at the disposal of the masses of this country, we shall have done our duty. The happiness which we get from serving humanity will be our reward. We stand or fall with society, and as true artists we should disdain self advancement and cheap exhibitionism.

Such are the objects which have led to the formation of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. It wants literature to bear the message of

efforts and action. It is not concerned with problems of language as such. With a correct ideology, language will become simpler and better: So long as the *content* of our writing is on the right lines, we need not worry about the form. The literature which is patronised by the privileged classes will adopt *their* forms of expression; the literature which is of the masses will speak *their* language. Our object is to create such an atmosphere in this country as would help the growth of progressive literature. We want to establish branches of our Association in all the literary centres of India; we want to organise the creative literary life in those centres, by reading papers, by discussions and by criticism. It is in this way that our literary renaissance will take place. We want a branch of the Association in every province and in every linguistic zone, so that we can carry our message to all parts of the country. For some time past, Indian writers have been feeling the necessity for such an organisation. At various places some steps have already been taken in this direction. Our object is to help all such progressive tendencies in our literary world. We writers suffer from one great defect, and that is the absence of *action* in our lives. It is a bitter reality; we cannot shut our eyes to it. Indeed, this absence of an active life was considered to be a virtue by our writers, for it was agreed, an active life leads to intolerance and narrow-mindedness. A puritan, enforcing his doctrine on others, is certainly a greater nuisance than a libertine; the latter may save himself, whereas there is no hope for an arrogant puritan. So long as the object of literature was mere entertainment, so long as it was a means of escape from life, when it demanded a mere shedding of tears over life and its sorrows, an active participation in the social struggles was not required from a literary man. We, however, have a different conception of literature and the duties of a writer. We shall consider only that literature as progressive which is thoughtful, which awakens in us the spirit of freedom and of beauty; which is creative; which is luminous with the realities of life; which moves us; which leads us to action and which does not set on us as a narcotic; which does not produce in us a state of intellectual somnolence – for, if we continue to remain in that state it can only mean that we are no longer alive.

Half a Century of Marxist Cultural Movement in India

E M S Namboodiripad

Review article on Sudhi Pradhan's Documents of the Marxist Cultural Movement in India, published in The Marxist, Vol. 4, No. 2, April-June 1986.

It was in April 1936 that the Progressive Writers' Association was formed in Lucknow. The Golden Jubilee of that organisation was celebrated recently under the presidentship of one of its founder members, Mulk Raj Anand, in Lucknow from 9 to 11 April.

Sudhi Pradhan, the editor of the three-volume collection of material on the *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, deserves the gratitude of all those who are interested in studying the development of India's cultural movement since the 1930s – a movement which is closely associated with the political, trade union and kisan movements in the country. With patient and painstaking labour, he has brought together all that was available to him of the documents concerning the origin, growth and the problems not only of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), but of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) as well. He appends his own foreword or preface to each of the three volumes.

Having been an active participant in this entire period with personal experience of the movement, he has brought all that to bear on his collection of material. Many paid tribute to him when he brought out the first volume in 1979. Striking a personal note, I recall with nostalgia the function organised for releasing that volume in which, in the presence of the late Dr Adhikari, Prof. Hiren Mukherjee presented a copy of the volume to me. That function and the study of the material contained in the three volumes bring back to memory the bitter battles in which the founders of the PWA were involved – first with the avowed opponents of the movement and subsequently among themselves – on what constitutes the PWA and the IPTA. I myself had the privilege and the unpleasant duty of participating in this battle of ideas, though it was confined more or less to my home state of Kerala and its cultural movement. The documents collected in the three volumes enable the readers to have as objective a view as possible of the entire development of the Marxist cultural movement in India.

Emergence of the Left

It was no accident that the PWA was formed in 1936 and that too in the city of Lucknow. The venue was Congress Nagar – the temporarily built township

constructed for holding the annual session of the Indian National Congress. That session was remarkable for the new turn to the Left given to the Congress policy.

The presidential address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru and the resolution adopted at the session showed the clear impact of two important events in the development of the Left movement in the country: first, the emergence of an organised central leadership for the Communist Party of India which unified all the scattered Communist groups working throughout the country; secondly, the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. The ideas of the Left movement propagated by the CPI and the newly formed CSP were echoed in the presidential address and the resolution adopted at the Congress session.

The same city (Lucknow) was host to another important session – the foundation conference of the All-India Kisan Congress (later renamed as Kisan Sabha) whose Golden Jubilee was also observed in the third week of May this year at Patna.

Among the three gatherings in Lucknow half a century ago, the most important from the national point of view was, of course, the session of the Indian National Congress, which marked a definite shift to the Left. That, however, would not have been effective had it not been for the fact that the other two were also taking place.

The emergence of the Kisan Sabha showed that the mass of the Indian peasantry who had fought the British rulers, first under the dethroned feudal chieftains and then under the bourgeois leaders of the anti-imperialist movement, had begun to search for new allies while organising themselves independently but as part of the anti-imperialist movement.

The emergence of united action between the re-organised CPI and the newly formed CSP showed that, within the Congress itself, an independent Left force with international contacts had started emerging and challenging the authority of the Right.

The formation of the PWA (followed subsequently by the IPTA) showed that the new Left trend had started asserting itself not only in the political and economic, but in the cultural movement as well.

Mulk Raj Anand, with whose article on the PWA the first volume opens, takes the readers back to

those dark foggy November days of the year 1935 in London when after the disillusionment and disintegration of years of suffering in India and conscious of 1931, a few of us emerged from the slough of despondency of the cafes and garrets of Bloomsbury and formed the nucleus of the Progressive Writers' Association. For, since the historic meeting in the Nanking restaurant in Denmark Street where the original manifesto was read and lectures delivered (and through less eager, ill-attended meetings) through the first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference held in Lucknow in April 1936, and

the opening of branches or committees in the various linguistic zones, through the provincial conferences and the opening of more branches, our organisation has, today, gathered into it or around it, the most significant writers in India and commands membership so large that it forms, quantitatively, one of the largest blocks for the defence of culture in the world. (Vol. 1, pp. 1-2)

Another founding member of the PWA and its General Secretary for long, Sajaad Zaheer, says in his reminiscences:

Just remember the two years preceding 1935. The political effect of the economic crisis that engulfed the world took in Germany the shape of the dictatorship of Hitler and his Nazi party. In London and Paris, we daily came across the miserable refugees who had escaped or were exiled from Germany. Everywhere one could hear the painful stories of fascist repression ... The painful darkness which, spreading from the bright world of arts and learning that was Germany, was throwing its fearful shades on Europe – all these had shattered the inner tranquility of our hearts and minds. One power could stem the tide of this modern barbarism – the organised power of the factory workers, the power that emerges from the working together, through co-operation, through ceaseless struggle against repression and exploitation of capitalists. The experience of the continuous class struggle creates on this class a revolutionary class consciousness enabling it to frustrate the attempts of capitalism to put the clock back and to become the creators of a new civilisation. (Vol. 1, pp. 33-34)

It was to this new awareness that a definite political form was being given in India by the re-organised leadership of the CPI and the newly formed CSP. It was again this that was echoed in Jawaharlal Nehru's presidential address and in the resolutions adopted in the Lucknow session of the Congress under his guidance. It formed the ideological and programmatic basis also of the newly created organisation of the Indian peasantry.

Lucknow in 1936, in short, witnessed the emergence of a new *class* political force – broad enough to cover all classes and strata in Indian society, but under the general guidance and leadership of the international working class headed by the Soviet Union and the Communist International.

The new force, however, was not a mere political movement but all-embracing; it did not leave untouched any aspect of the individual or social life of man. Struggle on the cultural front was, in other words, an inseparable part of the struggle in the economic, the political and the social arena.

Cultural and Politics Are Indivisible

The foundation Conference of the PWA had the blessings of such giants of Indian literature as Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and Munshi

Premchand. Premchand, in fact, presided over the Conference of the PWA and said:

Hitherto we had been content to discuss language and its problems; the existing critical literature of Urdu and Hindu has dealt with the construction and the structure of the language alone. This was doubtless an important and necessary work and the pioneers of our literature have supplied this preliminary need and performed their task admirably. But language is a means, not an end; a stage, not the journey's end. Its purpose is to mould our thoughts and emotions and to give them the right direction. We have now to concern ourselves with the meaning of things and to find the means of fulfilling the purpose for which the language is constructed. This is the main purpose of this conference. (Vol. 1, p. 52)

'Our literary taste', Premchand went on,

is undergoing a rapid transformation. It is coming more and more to grips with the realities of life; it interests itself with society or man as a social unit. It is not satisfied now with the singing of frustrated love, or with writing to satisfy only our sense of wonder; it concerns itself with the problems of our life and such themes as have a social value. The literature which does not arouse in us a critical spirit, or satisfy our spiritual needs, which is not 'force-giving' and dynamic, which does not awaken our sense of beauty, which does not make us face the grim realities of life in a spirit of determination, has no use for us today. It cannot even be termed as literature. (Vol. 1, p. 53)

Recalling that religion had in the past 'taken upon itself the task of striving after man's spiritual and moral guidance' and that 'it used fear and cajolery, reward and retribution as its chief instruments in this work,' Premchand pointed out:

Today, however, literature has undertaken a new task, and its instrument is our inherent sense of beauty; it tried to achieve its aim by arousing this sense of beauty in us. The more a writer develops this sense through his observations of nature, the more effective will his writings become. All that is ugly or detestable, all that is inhuman, becomes intolerable to such a writer. He becomes the standard bearer of humanity, of moral uprightness, of nobility. It becomes his duty to help all those who are downtrodden, oppressed and exploited – individuals or groups – and to advocate their cause. And his judge is society itself – it is before society that he brings his plaint. He knows that the more realistic his story is, the more full of expression and movement his picture, the more intimate his observation of human nature, human psychology, the greater the effect he will produce. It is not even enough that from a psychological point of view his characters resembled human beings; we must further be satisfied that they are *real* human beings of bone and flesh.

We do not believe in an imaginary man; his acts and his thoughts do not impress us. (Vol. 1, pp. 53-54)

Munshi Premchand's presidential address to the foundation Conference of the PWA is a remarkable piece of literary criticism integrating the best in the Indian and world culture, Indian patriotism with international humanism. It showed that Mulk Raj Anand, Sajaad Zaheer and their comrades were not importing into India something that was alien to her culture, but that our own soil was fertile enough to accept and nurture the seeds thrown all over the world by such giants of world literature as Maxim Gorky, Romain Rolland, Henry Barbusse and so on.

Founded as it was under these circumstances, it was natural that the PWA should adopt a Manifesto which was at once political and cultural. It said:

Radical changes are taking place in Indian society. The spirit of reaction, however, though moribund and doomed to ultimate decay, is still operative and is making desperate efforts to prolong itself. Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical culture, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find a refuge from reality in baseless spiritualism and ideality. The result is that it has become anaemic in body and mind and had adopted a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology.

It is the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature. They should undertake to develop an attitude of literary criticism, which will discourage the general reactionary and revisionist tendencies on questions like family, religion, sex, war and society. *They should combat literary trends reflecting communalism, racial antagonism, and exploitation of man by man* (emphasis added).

It is the object of our Association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes in whose hands they have been degenerating so long, to bring arts into the closest touch with the people and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future we envisage.

While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilisation, we shall criticise, in all its aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country, and we shall foster through interpretative and creative work (with both Indian and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving. *We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and unreason, we reject as reactionary. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and customs in the*

light of reason, which helps us to act, to organise ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive (emphasis in the original). (Vol. 1, pp. 20-21)

The Second Conference made certain amendments to the above which are not of a substantial nature. Among the literary trends to be combated (in the text quoted above with emphasis added), the amendment added sexual libertinism. Another amendment was the addition of the aims and objects of the PWA, which were as follows:

The aims and objects of our Association are as follows:

- (1) To establish organisations of writers to correspond to the various linguistic zones of India; to coordinate these organisations by holding conferences and by publishing literature; to establish a close connection between the central and local organisations and to cooperate with those literary organisations whose aims do not conflict with the basic aims of the Association;
- (2) To form branches of the Association in all the important towns of India;
- (3) To produce and to translate literatures of a progressive nature, to fight cultural reaction, and in this way to further the cause of India's freedom and social regeneration;
- (4) To protect the interests of progressive authors;
- (5) To fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion. (Vol. 1, pp. 97-98)

Munshi Premchand's presidential address and the Manifesto adopted at the session would make it clear that the founders of the organisation completely disassociated themselves from the theory fashionable in those days, that the creative writers or other artists should be above politics. Every sensitive writer and artist was concerned with what happened around him or her. In India, the aspiration for freedom from foreign rule, putting an end to all that is out-moded in the centuries-old Indian society, rapid transformation of India's life and culture along the lines of modernisation – all these could not be separated from the aesthetic tastes and talents of the writers and artists. On a world scale, no sensitive human being (which includes writers and artists) could but be concerned with the threat of fascism and war which was hanging like a Damocles' sword over humanity. That is why, a few weeks after the PWA was born and the Second Congress of the International Writers Association was being held in London (from 19-23 June 1936), a Manifesto sent by the FWA and signed by Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chatterjee, Munshi Premchand, P.C. Ray, Jawaharlal Nehru, Pramatha Choudhury, Ramananda Chatterjee, Nandalal Bose and others declared:

Today the spectre of a world war haunts the world. Fascist dictatorship has revealed its militant essence by its offer of guns instead of butter and the lust of empire-building in place of cultural opportunities. The methods resorted to by Italy for the subjugation of Abyssinia have rudely shocked all those who cherish a faith in reason and civilisation. Rivalry and contradiction among big imperialist powers, deliberate provocation of crude national

chauvinistic sentiments, high speed rearmaments -- these are but portents of the critical situation in which we are placed today. On our own and on behalf of our countrymen we take this opportunity to declare with one voice with the people of other countries that we detest war and want to abjure it and that we have no interest in war. We are against the participation of India in any imperialist war for we know that the future of civilisation will be at stake in the next war. (Foreword to Vol. 1, p. vii)

Political Differences

The favourable circumstances, national and international, under which the PWA was formed, however, did not last long. The political unity which embraced Communists and Socialists at one end, and the bulk of Left Congressmen on the other, was broken in three years: the electoral victory of Subhas Chandra Bose in the keenly contested presidential election of the Congress (1939) turned out to be the beginning of the split between the Communists and the Socialists, both of them with the Bose followers, the extreme vacillation shown by Nehru and his followers which landed them in the end to become the faithful followers of Mahatma Gandhi, culminating in the bitter battles that were fought between the Communists and the rest of the anti-Communists after the launching of the Quit India struggle.

This found reflection in the PWA, as was clear from the Foreword written by the PWA General Secretary, Sajjad Zaheer, to the collection of documents emanating from the Fourth All India Conference of the PWA. He said: 'As in the political field, so in literature and art, a "deadlock" seems to have been reached in our country. The Fourth All India Progressive Writers' conference which met in Bombay in the fourth week of May (1943) attempted to break this "literary stalemate"' (Vol. 3, p. 1).

The hope of having broken the 'stalemate' was, however, wishful thinking. The great divide on the political front (between the supporters and opponents of the Quit India struggle) continued in the country, and reflected itself in the field of art and literary writing. Many who had earlier played a role or participated in the foundation of the PWA became bitter enemies of that organisation and everything it stood for. Nor was this surprising. After all, the basis of unity at the time of the formation of the PWA was political-cum-cultural, not merely cultural. When the shift took place in the political situation internationally and nationally, the original unity could not but be disrupted.

Once again, after the end of the war and the new national developments culminating in the 1947 transfer of power from the British to Indian hands, different and conflicting assessments emerged not only among the political parties, but also among the intellectuals and the artists. Since then, for nearly four decades, every turn in the internal or international political situation has tended to divide the political activists and thinkers, from which no artist,

writer or other intellectual can dissociate himself or herself. Naturally, therefore, the half century that has elapsed since the foundation Conference of the PWA (barring the first three years) has been a period in which bitter battles were fought among the leaders and activists as much of the cultural as the political movement.

A reference may in this context be made of the subjective desire expressed by many well-meaning activists and sympathisers of the Marxist cultural movement in India that the differences that cropped up among them during the last fifty years should be resolved. Those who give expression to this feeling almost suggest that the PWA formed fifty years ago, and the IPTA nearly a decade later, should be revived and made to function as united and cohesive bodies.

The editor of these three volumes, in his foreword or preface to separate volumes, also appears to be inclined to this view. I am referring to the criticism he makes in several places that the ideological-political mistakes of the leadership of the Communist movement in India are at least partially responsible for the decline of the Marxist cultural movement.

Is this view correct? I do not think so. On the other hand, it is in this fifty year-period that there has been an unprecedented upsurge of activity in the cultural field. It goes to the credit of Sudhi Pradhan that he has brought together in the three volumes abundant material showing how, at every stage in the history of the movement – even after it began to ‘decline and disintegrate’ – the upsurge of creative activity continued. In fact, in the very short period (Quit India struggle) when the Communist Party was fighting with its back to the wall and trying to break out of its isolation among the anti-imperialist masses, it was using literature, drama, folk arts, etc., as the most potent weapons against its political opponents. In terms of output, creative production exceeded, in that period of the Party’s battle for political survival, as compared to what had been done earlier.

The unique contribution of the Marxist cultural movement has been that artistic creation and appreciation is no more confined to the intellectual elite. The growth of the organised working class and peasant movement, together with the movements of other sections of the working people, had awakened the millions of toilers not only to political consciousness, but uplifted their aesthetic sensibilities and creative talents. I myself had occasion to refer to this in an article in *New Age* in December 1955 (quoted in Vol. 3). Mentioning the worker-peasant artists – dozens and scores of poets, story writers, producers and actors of plays, singers, etc. – of Kerala who had risen from the working people and ascribing the phenomenon to the fact that cultural activities have ceased to be confined to a narrow circle of upper-class intellectuals, I went on:

The credit for such a wide expansion of cultural activities among the working people should undoubtedly go to the trade unions, kisan sabhas and other

democratic mass organisations that have rapidly developed in Kerala during the last twenty five years. For, it was the awakening of the worker-peasant masses to class consciousness; the militant struggles which they waged for their long-range objectives; the hope and confidence which were engendered in their hearts that a glorious future awaited them if only they united their forces with all the democratic and patriotic elements in the country; the sense of strength that developed within them through the struggle which they unitedly waged against the common foe – it was these that brought out the hidden talents in the hundreds and thousands of common people which were lying dormant for centuries. In other words, it was the entry of the workers and peasant masses as an independent force into the arena of economic and political struggle that made their entry into the field of cultural activity possible.

It is however, not only in the field of arts, but in the field of natural and social sciences as well, that the growth of the organised working class and peasant movement has exerted its influence. One of the earliest and most important activities of the trade unions, kisan sabhas and other democratic organisations of the working people was the organisation of night schools, reading rooms and libraries and study classes for the imparting of the principles of political economy and other social sciences, etc., all of which were calculated to stimulate an interest in, and facilitate the study of, serious subjects which were rarely dealt with in Malayalam literature.

The hunger for knowledge which has thus been aroused among the common people has made it possible for the authors and publishers of works on such subjects to produce them and get them sold in a comparatively short space of time. This has made a fundamental transformation in the situation in the publishing world of Kerala in the sense that publication which once took as much as four or five years to sell are now sold off in less than a year. (Vol. 3, pp. 482–83)

I have given the above quotation because, though confined to one state, it briefly sums up what happened to the cultural movement all over the country for two decades since the formation of the PWA. Sudhi Pradhan has compiled material from most other states which tells the same story. One can, therefore, unhesitatingly observe that, just as in the economic and political fields, the Communist, Socialist and other Leftist movements in the country have uplifted the common man culturally also: he is increasingly becoming the creator as well as the critic of productions in cultural field. Can this be called 'decline' or 'disintegration' of the Marxist cultural movement in India? Is it not, in fact, a creditable advance?

It is, of course, true that the organisation that came into being half a century ago, the PWA, and its sister organisation, IPTA, which came to be formed a little later, do not exist as all-India organisations today. (Even when they were in existence, they were better known in Hindi, Urdu and Bengali-

speaking regions, though other states also had active regional branches.) The fact, however, remains that then as now, there existed and still exist organisations and movements which, though not formally affiliated to the PWA and the IPTA, have been working broadly on the lines indicated at the foundation conferences of the two organisations.

I may for example point out that the working people of Kerala produced in this period as many creative and critical works as were produced in other states of India; the bitter controversy that accompanied the setting up the Kerala unit of the PWA in 1937 and the still more bitter controversies that raged in the 1940s (between the Communists and others) were no less intensive in Kerala than anywhere else. These, however, do not get adequate representation in the material brought together in these three volumes – for which, of course, the main responsibility should be borne by the leaders and activists of the movement in the state itself.

Looking back to the bitter debates that took place in this fifty-year period (including those in the 1940s and 1950s), I am convinced that nobody in the Marxist cultural movement has the right to deplore the differences that cropped up among the main champions of the movement. The sharp polemics in which we were engaged show the virility of what was growing – the new literature and the art which was *for* the people as well as *by* them.

This, of course, does not excuse many of us who used much sharper words in debate than we should have, nor even many of the obviously wrong ideas to which we gave expression in those days. While undoubtedly taking due note of all these deficiencies and weaknesses, however, the Marxist cultural movement is as much a living reality today as its political, economic and other forms of expression.

Where does the Marxist cultural movement stand today? Anybody who has eyes to see will agree that all-India organisations of the PWA and the IPTA type are not possible today since there are so many organisations throughout the country, each of them having their own distinctive identities, though they fall under the category of organisations of progressive writers and artists. The members and activists of every one of them having their own distinctive features, it will be utopian to try to bring them under one organisation with one constitution, one set of rules.

Added to this is the fact that the country is divided into so many linguistic and cultural entities for which nothing more than coordination by way of periodical gatherings (with no binding resolution adopted) is the best that can be attempted. The very diversity of the organisation that has sprung up in this half a century is a tribute to the virility of the movement that was founded in April 1936 in the city of Lucknow. While it did not develop into the huge banyan tree which was the dream of many votaries of the PWA and the IPTA, their roots have struck deep into the soil of India, of every linguistic cultural group that is inhabiting this country. One has to compare the content of the creative and critical works of today with their predecessors of

half a century ago, compare the two with the materials of the 1936 Conference to find the profound impact of the latter on the Indian cultural scene.

The only other point I wish to make here is the relation between the cultural and political movements. As Munshi Premchand's presidential address to, and the Manifesto adopted by, the foundation Conference of the PWA had made it clear, national and world politics is an integral part of human life, and therefore of the arts and literature as well. At the same time, politics is only a part and not the whole of life. No writer or artist can be above politics, though as a creative artist and writer he or she may not be subjectively committed to it. Munshi Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore and other giants of Indian literature, or Gorky, Romain Rolland and so on of world literature, could not but be influenced by political developments around them.

However, they are basically creative artists and writers – a fact which, let it be admitted, many of us forgot when we engaged ourselves in controversies. The position was correctly stated by Lenin in a letter he addressed to Maxim Gorky on 31 July 1919.

Merciless in his criticism of one for whom he had the greatest affection and respect, Lenin told Gorky that he was degenerating. 'The more I read over your letter,' he said, 'the more I arrive at the conviction that the letter and your conclusions and all your impressions are quite sick.' The reason for this, Lenin pointed out, was that Gorky was then living in Petrograd where only one who 'is exceptionally well-informed *politically* and has a specially wide political experience can see what is happening in the Soviet Union'.

If you want to observe, you must observe from below where it is possible to *survey* the work of building a new life in a workers' settlement in the provinces or in the countryside. There one does not have to make a political summing up of extremely complex data, there one need only observe. Instead of this, you have put yourself in the position of a professional editor or translator, etc., a position in which it is impossible to observe the new building of a new life, a position in which all your strength is frittered away on the sick grumbling of a sick intelligentsia.

Having thus sharply rebuked Gorky for having lost touch with the people who, after all, are the real creators of all that is best in the material and spiritual world which man has created (as Gorky himself has explained in his writings), Lenin added: 'I don't want to thrust my advice on you, but I cannot help saying: change your circumstances radically, your environment, your abode, your occupation – otherwise life may disgust you for good' (*Lenin on Art and Literature*, Progress Publishers, pp. 224–28).

Using the above advice of Lenin to Gorky as our guidance, can it not be said that many of us political activists tried to *thrust our advice* on eminent writers and artists, while many of our critics had taken up cudgels against us because, as political activists, our observation of the fighting common

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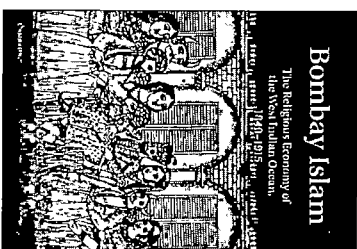
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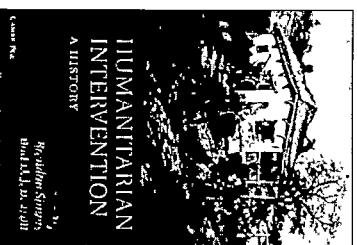
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